

THE COMPLETE
POETICAL WORKS⁴
OF
GEORGE DARLEY

NOW FIRST COLLECTED

REPRINTED FROM THE RARE ORIGINAL EDITIONS
IN THE POSSESSION OF THE DARLEY FAMILY,
AND EDITED WITH AN INTRODUCTION

BY

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INTRODUCTION

JULIUS HARE, in welcoming the appearance of Landor's *Fra Rupert*, wrote to the author that it rested with him, Henry Taylor, and George Darley 'to preserve the life of tragedy in England,' and Forster in commenting on the fact, says, 'Darley's fine dramatic genius well deserved that compliment.' A little later Thomas Carlyle linked Darley's name with that of yet another immortal. 'There is a trick,' he notes, 'of sham Elizabethan writing now prevalent that looks plausible, but in most cases means nothing at all. Darley has real lyrical genius; Taylor, wonderful sense, clearness, and weight of purpose; Tennyson a rich and exquisite fancy. All the other men of our tiny generation that I know of are, in poetry, either feeble or fraudulent.' That a writer whose fine dramatic genius was extolled by a critic of Forster's acumen, and whose real lyrical genius won commendation from one who so seldom indulged 'in the noble pleasure of praising' as did Carlyle, should to-day be but little known to the average student of English literature, is not strange when we recall the many instances of the rise and fall of literary reputations, and especially those of poets. Blake was almost unknown when Hayley was considered a great poet, and 'Jephson's triumphs as a tragic poet made his admirers tremble for Shakespeare'; the merits of Charles Wells' noble tragedy were not recognised until, almost at the close of the author's life, it was resuscitated by Mr. Swinburne, and the marvellous beauty of Edward Fitz-Gerald's translation of *The Rubáiyát* of Omar

Khayyám won no popular recognition until after his death.

George Darley was born in Dublin in 1795. He was the eldest of a family of four sons and three daughters. His father, Arthur Darley, an Irish gentleman of good family and independent means, married a daughter of John Darley, of Newry. The poet's parents were cousins. His mother was a woman of singular beauty and intelligence, and several members of his father's family were remarkable for their physical and intellectual gifts. While he was very young Darley's parents went to the United States, leaving him and his two sisters in the care of their grandfather, George Darley, of Springfield, Co. Dublin. At Springfield he remained until he was about ten years old, and throughout his life the impression there made on him by the sights and sounds of the country seems never to have faded. He always wrote with deep feeling when referring to this home of his childhood, and not a few of his poems written in later manhood amid very different surroundings in London were inspired by his lively recollections of those golden days, when, on his pony, he accompanied his grandfather on short rides through a district which is known as The Garden of Ireland. The little boy was much more full of thought than able for speech, for he suffered from an incurable stammer which was a source of deepest sorrow to him throughout his life, and which increased as years went on. To Springfield the poet always referred as 'the unforgettable home' of his childhood, and he wrote of it : 'When a child I thought myself miserable, but now see that by comparison I was happy, at least all the "sunshine of the breast" I now enjoy seems a reflection of that in the dawn of life. I have been to *la belle France* and to *bella Italia*, yet the brightest sun which ever shone upon me broke over Ballybetagh mountains.' The lines which, with a lively recollection of a more famous fountain, he wrote 'On a Fountain' are addressed to the 'Shrubbery Well' at Springfield, and exhibit a

very strong and deep affection for the scenes of his boyhood.

When his parents returned from America, Darley went to live with them in Dublin. He entered Trinity College, Dublin, in 1815 and graduated in 1820. There is little doubt that during his university career he was much hampered by the impediment in his speech, which proved to be an insurmountable barrier to ordinary human intercourse and the amenities of social life. Mr. Streatfeild, in his article on Darley in the *Quarterly Review*, July, 1902, states that in his college days Darley's stutter interfered with his success in a scholarship examination, and in later years it isolated him from his fellow-creatures, and made him a hermit and a misanthrope. In addition to hindrances in other ways, it limited Darley in the choice of a profession. No wonder that, under the circumstances he should refer to the impediment constantly and have it ever present in his thoughts. He calls it 'a hideous mask upon my mind, which not only disfigures but nearly suffocates it'; and again, in words which prove how deeply he felt the isolation it entailed, he writes: 'There is no more regrettable circumstance about my cancer of the heart, my impediment, than that it keeps me still, as it kept and must keep me always, a solitudinarian. I can only enjoy society as a picture drawn on my mind, the thing itself is to me a punishment, so I must be content with seeing it, as Sancho did his mistress, by hearsay.'

Soon after he took his B.A. degree in 1820, Darley determined to adopt literature as a profession, and accordingly we find him established in London in 1822, when his first book, a volume of poems entitled *The Errors of Ecstasie and Other Pieces* was published by Whittaker. The poem from which the book takes its name consists chiefly of a dialogue in blank verse between 'a Mystic' and the Moon! It opens with an impressive monologue upon suicide by the Mystic, in which there is much wealth of imagination, and in which a vocabulary rich in newly-coined terms is

employed. In spite of the poet's protest and warning, readers of Darley cannot regard the following passage as other than autobiographical :—

'Didst thou not quit,
Most rash, most unadvised and most vain,
No proferable cause asserted why,
The track which sober Wisdom pointed out,
And plain Experience 'stablish'd as the true,
Th' ascent to riches, happiness, and fame,
Didst thou not barter Science for a song ?
Thy gown of Learning for a sorry mantle ?
The student's quiet for the city's din ?
At once—thy social duty to assist,
By rational pursuits, the common good,
Bound in thine own—for selfish Fantasie
Useless to others, fatal to thyself ?'

The 'Other Pieces' in the volume are here reprinted in the order in which they appeared. They cannot be said to contain any promise.

In the year following the appearance of *The Errors of Ecstasie*, Darley became a regular contributor to *The London Magazine*, then at the height of its popularity. For this magazine, which was at the time the property of Taylor and Hessey, and which commanded the best talent of the day (Charles Lamb being its best known contributor), Darley, under the pseudonym of John Lacy, wrote a series of hypercritical and almost truculent articles on living dramatists. The most noticeable of these *Letters to the Dramatists of the Day* is one which appeared in December, 1823, and in which he severely criticised Barry Cornwall (Bryan Waller Procter), while according high praise to a *woman* and a *boy*—Joanna Baillie and *Minor* Beddoes. To this, Procter, whose style of versification had been designated 'effeminate,' replied in a letter to which Beddoes, writing in March, 1824, refers: 'I have just been reading your epistle to our Ajax Flagellifer, the bloody John Lacy : on one point, where he is most vulnerable, you have omitted to

place your sting. I mean his palpable ignorance of the Elizabethans and many other dramatic writers of this and preceding times, with whom he ought to have formed at least a nodding acquaintance before he offered himself as physician to Melpomene.'

There are some interesting glimpses of Darley in the little volume of *The Letters of Thomas Lovell Beddoes*, edited by Mr. Gosse. We find Beddoes, who had met Darley at Mrs. Shelley's, writing on 17th April to his friend Kelsall, that 'Darley is a tallish, slender, pale, light-eyebrowed, gentle-looking, bald-pate, in a brown surtout with a duodecimo under his arm,—stammering to a most provoking degree, so much so as to be almost inconvertible;—he is supposed to be writing a comedy and tragedy, or perhaps both in one.'

Darley's connexion with *The London Magazine* naturally brought him into touch with many of the leading writers of the day. Taylor and Hessey, the proprietors, invited their contributors once a month to a dinner given by the firm at their offices in Waterloo Place, and at these social gatherings Darley met many men whose names are familiar to all students of English literature. Here came Charles Lamb, Allan Cunningham, Hood, Procter, Talfourd, Hazlitt, De Quincey, Henry Cary, John Hamilton Reynolds, and John Clare the Northamptonshire peasant poet. With Cary and Lamb, Darley was intimate. He frequently dined with the former, and we find Lamb inviting the translator of Dante to 'accompany our old chums of the *London*, Darley and A[llan] C[unningham] to Enfield.' Lamb held Darley in high esteem. He refers to the declining *London Magazine*, and writes: 'The only clever hand they have is Darley.' We get glimpses of Darley at Enfield, sharing with Mary Lamb the delightful task of teaching Latin to the charming actress Fanny Kelly (to whom Lamb sent a quaintly-worded proposal of marriage), or as her constant shadow in her walks through the Enfield woodlands.

To *The London Magazine* Darley contributed verse as well as prose, but always under an assumed name, making it difficult to-day to determine the authorship. Kelsall and Procter are our authorities for assigning to him the 'Dramaticles' entitled 'The Chase,' 'The Ruelle,' and 'Olympian Revels,' which appeared in 1823 and 1824; but for much of the poet's work, such as 'The Rhapsodist,' we have only internal evidence to guide us. Happily there is no doubt attached to 'Lilian of the Vale,' a charming prose story containing the beautiful lyric 'I've been roaming,' which, when set to ballad-music by Horn and sung by the celebrated Miss Paton became extremely popular. This tale Darley included, with others from *The London Magazine*, in a volume entitled *The Labours of Idleness; or, Seven Nights' Entertainments*, published by John Taylor in 1826; the name of the author being given as Guy Penseval.

The Labours of Idleness contains seven tales and sketches with verse interspersed, and it is written in a style closely resembling that of Washington Irving, a fact of which Darley seems to have been well aware, for three years later the book was reprinted as the second volume of two issued under the title of *The New Sketch Book*, by G. Crayon, jun., the first volume consisting of stories and descriptive articles. The chief interest of the book lies in the glimpses it affords of the author, who in the opening tale, 'The Enchanted Lyre,' indulges in confessions which are all the more valuable in that they give us the only reliable picture of the poet we possess. Written in his favourite character of a visionary, these outpourings cannot be regarded as anything save autobiographical notes. The tales are prefaced by an 'Epistle Dedicatory,' in which the supposed editor, Guy Penseval, purports to explain how the contents of the volume found their way into his hands. 'Of the four remaining articles,' the reader is informed, 'this is a straightforward account. The last is written by an obscure young man, one G—— D——, who twinkled

in the literary hemisphere a year or two ago, but has lately disappeared. He was rather an anomaly. Some of his friends were good enough to call him a genius ; for which he always (being of a very grateful temper) made them a bow. Others of them thought he was mad, and were even considerate enough to inform him of his deplorable situation ; to these also he returned every due acknowledgment. I myself, who ought to have known him, could not exactly say which he was. Sometimes I thought him the one, sometimes the other, sometimes neither, sometimes both. Yet we had been inseparable for thirty years ! I loved him as myself ; but he, wayward mortal ! though by inclination I am sure my sincerest well-wisher, oftentimes exhibited himself my greatest enemy. He has frequently, on pretence of doing me a service, injured me beyond reparation ; and, indeed, to him are almost all the misfortunes of my life attributable. But I could never prevail on myself to throw him off, although by a most unhandsome trick of his (spiriting vinegar through his teeth or out of a quill) he mortally offended several of my best friends, who would never afterwards approach me, but always took off their hats at a respectful distance. Notwithstanding this foolish propensity, he was naturally of a hypochondriac, melancholy disposition, which was no doubt augmented by the nervous sensibility of his frame, and the delicacy of his constitution. Such a temperament is usually coupled with an imaginative brain and a romantic turn of thinking ; he was, indeed, a day-dreamer of no ordinary extravagance, and was perpetually creating such labyrinths of thought around him, that no wonder if he was sometimes lost in them. But in the main he was as sound as I am, and could even laugh as I did at the excesses into which his enthusiasm led him. Some of his compositions were less irregular, and, indeed, as works of fancy, their novelty of conception and imagery may perhaps recommend them with those who have just as severe a contempt for meteors, and

just as profound an admiration for paving-stones, as I wish them. It is, however, improper, as well as immaterial, to dilate further upon these matters. I have only to say, that "Lilian of the Vale" was written by him: that he bequeathed it to me as a mark of his singular affection; and that I now give it publicity, in the hope that by so doing I may gratify not only the reader, but the spirit of D—— himself, which perhaps even yet hovers about me and prompts this resolution.'

In 'The Enchanted Lyre' the following passage gives a very graphic description of the poet's most marked characteristics:—

'Solitude is not so much my necessity as my inclination. I have neither love for society, nor in those agreeable qualities of mind, manner, and disposition which would make society love me. To confess a truth,—I once made the experiment, more from curiosity than a desire to succeed, but it was like to have cost me my own good opinion, as well as that of my acquaintances, who, whilst I remained in seclusion, voted me a philosopher, but the moment I exhibited myself in society, set me down as a fool. I always found myself so embarrassed in the presence of others, and every one so embarrassed in mine—I was so perpetually infringing the rule of politeness, saying or doing awkward things, telling unpalatable truths, or giving heterodox opinions on matters long since established as proper, agreeable, becoming, and the contrary, by the common creed of the world; there was so much to offend and so little to conciliate in my manners, arrogant at one time, puling at another; dull when I should have been entertaining; loquacious when I should have been silent (for I could sometimes be very witty out of place, and very instructive upon uninteresting topics); I was, in fine, such an incomprehensible, unsystematized, impersonal compound of opposite qualities, with no overwhelming power of mind to carry off, as I have seen in others, these heterogeneous particles in a flood of intellectuality,

that I quickly perceived obscurity was the sphere in which Nature had destined me to shine ; and that the very best compliment my friends could pay me, when I had left them, was to forget me and my faults for ever. At first, indeed, there were several persons who liked, or seemed to like me, from a certain novelty or freshness in my manner, but as soon as that wore off they liked me no longer. I was "an odd being," or "a young man of some genius, but very singular"; something to fill up the gaps of tea-table conversation when the fineness of the evening and the beauty of the prospect had been already discussed by the party.'

The Labours of Idleness, though written in a simple and graceful style, is interesting chiefly on account of the lyrics with which the author enriched its pages. and which have all the beauty, if some of the faultiness, of involuntary song. That Darley sang because he felt impelled to do so, he asserts more than once. The hero of his 'Enchanted Lyre' explains that 'being the man I am, I cannot help being a poet. Not that I ever saw Parnassus, much less trod it. . . . But I have a *Parnassus of my own*, and a whole temple to myself. . . . In plain terms, I assert that I am a poet ; if not of Nature's making, at least of my own.' One of the tales in this book 'Lilian of the Vale,' to which reference has already been made, contained the germ of *Sylvia, or, the May Queen*, a lyrical drama which is Darley's chief contribution to literature, and which was published by John Taylor in 1827, and is the first work to which the poet attached his own name.

Writing from Clifton to Kelsall in 1825, Beddoes congratulated his friend on 'awakening to a sense of Darley,' and adds, 'he must have no little perseverance to have gone through so much of that play, it will perchance be the first star of a new day.' The play referred to undoubtedly is *Sylvia*, but the hope expressed that so beautiful a poem might prove to be the herald of a new era in English literature was shattered by the appearance three years later than

Sylvia of *Poems chiefly Lyrical*, in the light of which minor stars 'paled their uneffectual fires.' But *Sylvia* did not lack praise. 'Seven long years,' wrote Darley to Miss Mitford, 'did I live on a charitable saying of Coleridge's, that he sometimes liked to take up *Sylvia*.' Lamb sent by desire 'Darley's very poetical poem' to Bernard Barton, and writes, 'You will like, I think, the novel headings of each scene. Scenical directions in verse are novelties.' Miss Mitford wrote in 1836: 'I have just had a present of a most exquisite poem, which old Mr. Cary, the translator of Dante and Pindar, thinks more highly of than any poem of the present day. . . . It is exquisite, something between the *Faithful Shepherdess* and *The Midsummer Night's Dream*'; and Miss Elizabeth Barrett (as Mrs. Browning then was), called it, in a letter to Richard Hengist Horne, 'a beautiful, tuneful pastoral.'

It is not easy to account for the non-success of *Sylvia*. The poem is full of melody and colour, and possesses the indescribable charm which clings to the wild-wood beauty of the dog-rose and the dew. The scene is that of an enchanted land—

There the elf-girls flood with wings
Valleys full of plaintive air;
There breathe perfumes; there in rings
Whirl the foam-bewildered springs;
Siren there
Winds her dizzy hair and sings.

The Mortals, young and joyous, are en-isled in their lovely valley like a second Ferdinand and Miranda, and win at once the sympathy of the reader, while the Immortals are as fascinating a band of fairies as ever played pranks in a poet's imagination. They resemble rather 'the light militia of the lower sky' depicted by the playful fancy of Pope, than the more human creations which haunt the dells and glades of *The Midsummer Night's Dream*. Nephele, though a sprite, maintains his individuality throughout, in a

manner such as only Ariel of *The Tempest* does, and no more bewitching elf ever in the merry moonshine tipped dew. The scenical directions in verse are, as Lamb pointed out, a novelty, and as bits of descriptive verse they bear eloquent evidence to their author's ability to draw a mental picture in a few strokes. That the human element is not lacking in *Sylvia* is proved by the fact that Sir Henry Taylor, 'the Bacon of the rhyming crew,' tells us in his autobiography, 'I had a feeling which I have never seen expressed except in three lines of Darley's—

There is a melancholy in sunbright fields
Deeper to me than gloom; I am ne'er so sad
As when I sit amid bright scenes alone.'

The author of *Philip van Artevelde* thought very highly of Darley, and mentioned him to Sir Francis Hastings Doyle as the first of his 'four unknown, but real contemporary poets.'

Sylvia not bringing him the fame as a poet for which he looked, Darley turned his attention to mathematics and

the dull
Undeviating, dusty road of Science,

and being, in Carlylese, 'mathematician, considerable actually,' we find his name appearing at this period of his life as the compiler of several popular treatises on geometry, astronomy, and kindred subjects.

Charles Lamb, in a letter to Bernard Barton, written in February, 1825, noted the decline of *The London Magazine*, and asks 'What are T[aylor] and H[essey] about?' Later he refers to Darley, and adds, 'his function seems suspended.' *The Literary Gazette*, founded by Colburn in 1817, and edited by William Jerdan, and *The Athenæum*, founded in 1829, and taken over and edited by Charles Wentworth Dilke, superseded *The London Magazine*. On the staff of *The Athenæum* were H. F. Chorley, Thomas Hood, Barry Cornwall, and Charles Lamb. Darley joined

this goodly company, and became for the remainder of his life a constant contributor to the journal. In 1833 and the following year he travelled in Italy, and sent home letters on art which won the admiration of Chorley, who wrote that in particular Darley 'laid stress on the elder painters, whose day had not yet come for England, on Giotto, on Perugino, on Francesco Francia, and on Lionardo da Vinci,' and adds, 'To myself as to a then untravelled man, the value of these letters was great indeed.'

On Darley's return to London he took up on *The Athenæum* the position of dramatic reviewer, and Chorley tells us he behaved 'in the most truculent and uncompromising fashion conceivable.' As in *The London Magazine* he fell foul of Barry Cornwall's *Mirandola*, so now Talfourd's *Ion* was the subject of his censures, and he appears to have treated even the best known authors of the day with extraordinary severity. The cause of this bitterness may have been, as Miss Mitford suggested, that 'his own disappointment, in not being acknowledged as one of the great poets of the age, . . . produced the most intolerant fastidiousness and determination to disallow all merit in other writers, such writers as Scott and Wordsworth, for instance, and indeed every poet in every language, except Shakespeare and Milton.'

The list of Darley's contributions to *The Athenæum* shows that he was in Rome in 1834; in Florence in September of that year, and that in December he wrote from Munich. In the spring of 1835 we find him in Paris, and later, again in Italy. In this year he printed for private circulation a few copies of a remarkable poem entitled *Nepenthe*, which, he explained in a letter to Chorley, he intended to complete in three cantos, but which he left in an unfinished condition, consisting of the first two cantos only. The publication of this poem is due to Mr. R. A. Streatfeild, who edited it with an introduction for Mr. Elkin Mathews, in 1897, the reprint being from the copy in the British Museum Library. This copy proving to

be imperfect, Mr. Streatfeild included a reprint of the entire poem with notes in his pleasing little volume of *Selections from Darley*, published by Messrs. Methuen in 1904. As he points out, until these reprints were issued, *Nepenthe* was one of the most inaccessible books in the world, the only copies known to be extant being the imperfect copy referred to, and two complete ones in the possession of the Darley family. It is from the last mentioned copies, kindly lent for the purpose by Miss Evelyn A. Darley, a cousin of the poet, that the reprint in this volume has been made. But as every one has not had the privilege of seeing or handling the unique original, the following description of it, given by Miss Mitford in her *Recollections of a Literary Life*, will prove of interest:—

‘It is,’ she wrote, ‘as different in appearance from the common run of books printed for private distribution, which are usually models of typography, of paper, and of binding, as it is in subject and composition. Never was so thorough an abnegation of all literary coxcombry as was exhibited in the outward form of this *Nepenthe*, unless there may be some suspicion of affectation in the remarkable homeliness, not to say squalidness of the strange little pamphlet as compared with the grace and refinement of the poetry. Printed with the most imperfect and broken types, upon a coarse, discoloured paper, like that in which a country shopkeeper puts up his tea, with two dusky leaves of a still dingier hue, at least a size too small, for cover, and garnished at top and bottom with a running margin in his own writing, such (resembling nothing but a street ballad or an old “broadside”) is the singular disguise . . . of the striking poem.’ Miss Mitford’s verdict on *Nepenthe* was: ‘There is no reading the whole, for there is an intoxication about it that turns one’s brain,’ a state of bewilderment no doubt increased by the long letters which the poet, grateful for her kindly reception of a poem intelligible to but few readers, addressed to her in acknowledgment. The self-revelation in this letter is so fascinating to all

lovers of Darley that the entire letter, notwithstanding its length, may here be given. It was written from 8 Beaumont Street, Oxford, and dated 22 August, the year undoubtedly being 1836:—

‘I cannot refrain, even at the risk of egotism, dear Miss Mitford, from expressing my pleasure and pride at your reception of my sorry little poetical tract, *Nepenthe*. Praise in general is to me more painful than censure, compliments as formal as those of “the season” from visitors, the frozen admiration of friends, I shudder in the heart at all this; but one word of real enthusiasm such as yours is happiness, hope, and inspiration to me. Such as yours, I say, for when, together with being enthusiastic, praise is discriminative, it becomes to me what a feather is to an eaglet; argue as we will, the spirit cannot soar without it. Mine has been, I confess, for a long time like one of Dante’s sinners, floating and bickering about in the shape of a *fiery tongue* on the Slough of Despond. If it ever has risen, ’twas an *ignis fatuus* for a moment only. Seven long years did I live on a charitable saying of Coleridge’s, that he sometimes liked to take up *Sylvia*. What you say of her and *Nepenthe* will keep the pulse of hope (which is the life of the spirit) going, so that I shall not die inwardly before the death of the flesh. Many do, it is my firm belief, who alas! have had still more ambition, and less success than I. Murder is done every night upon genius by neglect and scorn. You may ask, could I not sustain myself on the strength of my own approbation? But it might be only my vanity, not my genius, that was strong. Pye and Cibber no doubt did so, conceited themselves writing for posterity, which indeed they were—for its *ridicule*. Milton and Wordsworth are not instances; they had from the first many admirers, though far from as many as they deserved. Have not I, too, had some, however few, approvers? Why, yes, but their chorus in my praise was as small as the voice of my conscience, and, like it, served for little else than to keep me uneasy. You see, I am shriving myself to you, as

if, like the Lady of Loretto, you were *made* of indulgences.

‘Do not, I know you will not, let me lose your esteem for thus avowing the “last infirmity.” Milton, you remember, excuses it. I could defend it too. There are the stars as well as the bubbles of ambition ; the one brightly solid and exalted and “age-remaining” ; the other glittering, short-lived inanities of our own low sphere. Should we not endeavour to approach towards the Most High in *all* His perfections, intelligence as well as goodness? Believe me, I am far above the vulgar desire for *popularity*. I have none of that heartburn. Indeed, who of any pride but must feel as high as scorn above public praise when we see on what objects it is lavished? Should I stand a hairbreadth more exalted in my own esteem by displacing for a day such or such a poetaster from his pedestal? But, candidly, judicious praise is grateful to me as frankincense, partly no doubt for the love of fame, born with us like our other appetites, and greatly too I feel from its being the proof that my supposed path towards the Centre of Light is not an aberration. To seek, and to keep such path should be every one’s immortal object, because there alone is he the best co-efficient in advancing himself and the human system. Here you have my intellectual creed ; how it should have come into such a letter I cannot tell, but I have seldom the power to direct my mind, and must *only* follow it.

‘You are quite right about *Sylvia* ; the grotesque parts offend grievously against good taste. I acknowledge the error, and deplore it. But the truth is, my mind was born among the rude old dramatists, and has imbibed some of their *ogre* milk, which gave more of its coarseness than strength to my efforts. And again, *Sylvia* was written in the gasping times of laborious scientific engagements. All its prose especially was what a boiling brain first threw up to the surface—mere scum, which I never intended to pass for cream. Your distinction as to this gratifies me much,

not because it is ingenious, any critic can take an ingenious exception, but because it is just ; beyond all, your preference for *Nepenthe*, an unfinished sketch, to *Sylvia*, a completed poem, gives me confidence in your judgment. It shows me you have, what is so difficult to meet with, a substantive, self-existent taste for *poetry itself*, when you can thus like storyless abstraction better than a tale of some (though little) human interest—not that the latter should be unappreciated where it occurs, but it *alone* is usually thought of.

‘This brings me to your advice about undertaking a subject of both natures, the imaginative and the real. Such indeed always is, always should be, the scope of a truly Catholic poet. But alas ! I fear myself but a poor sectarian. The double mind seems wanting in me ; certainly the double experience, for I have none of mankind. My whole life has been an abstraction, such must be my works. I am, perhaps you know, labouring under a visitation much less poetic than that of Milton and Mæonides, but quite as effective, which has made me for life a separatist from society—

From the ways of cheerful men
Cut off, and for the book of knowledge fair
Presented with *each other page* a blank,
And wisdom at one entrance quite shut out.

Indeed, were my knowledge of humanity less confused than it is, I apprehend myself to be still too much one-minded for the making a proper use of it. Do you not expect so from *Nepenthe* ? Does it not speak a heat of brain mentally Bacchic ? I feel a necessity for intoxication (don’t be shocked, I am a mere tea-drinker) to write with any enthusiasm and spirit. I must think intensely or not at all. Now, if this be the case, if my mind be only occasional, intermittent, collapsive, which (unaffectedly impartial) I think it is, how should I conduct the *detail* of a story where poetic *furore* were altogether out of place ? It is a

great defect, I own, but my genius (as you call it) never enables me to sustain a subject, the subject must sustain *it*. I do so despise the pretension to omniscience and omnipotence now in vogue! This it is that makes us so feeble and shallow; will not the streams run deeper and stronger in one than many channels? But, besides, my health is an indifferent one; a tertian headache consumes more of my life than sleep does, and, worse than this, not only wasting it, but wearing it down. And I have to scribble every second day for means to prolong this detestable, headachy life, to criticize and review, committing *literary fratricide*, which is an iron that enters into my soul, and doing what disgusts me, not only with that day but the remaining one. All these things, and want of confidence still more than they, keep me a long letter-writer at your service. I have neither time nor inclination for aught else. Not but that I can show various first acts, introductory cantos, etc.—could *paper* hell with my good intentions—and have several folios only to be copied out of the parchment of my brain; the like interruptions and misgivings, however, cut them all down to such performances as *Nepenthe*. Your praise, indeed, almost touches my lips with fire, and I could begin to utter the flame of song. After having viewed a subject sufficiently, I will dedicate it without fail *to you*, if you will permit, as the resuscitator of *Sylvia*, and the raiser of my own spirits on earth. But for you, both might as well have been at the bottom of the Dead Sea.

‘I write at this fearful length because it is the only way, dear Miss Mitford, in which I can ever have unpainful communion with any friend. My impediment is, as it were, a hideous mask upon my mind, which not only disfigures, but nearly suffocates it. Yet I hope we shall meet, for even letters are half unintelligible without the recollections of those who write them. Besides, I wish so much, and with a parent’s fondness, to see the *foster-mother* of my *Sylvia* and *Nepenthe*. Egotism! egotism! from first

to last this letter is all about myself. Another hateful result of a solitary life, it makes me very selfish. Indeed, I doubt if it be not the mother of as many vices as Idleness, instead of so much *Wisdom*, and what not, it is said to hatch. Swift, you know, says : "There are many wretches who retire to solitude only that they may be with the devil in private." Man is surely a most gregarious animal ; we ought all to put minds together as near as the other beasts do their noses. I say this to show you that my misanthropy is compelled, and that my mind has not *grown hairy* like that of many another anchorite, as well as his body. Your recommendation as to Mr. Chorley has been in part followed. I wrote to him just before leaving London, and sent him your *Nepenthe*. But, as to making his acquaintance, I could as soon "eat a crocodile". However, even this I could do bit by bit, and a new acquaintance of the *man* kind I get down in the same way. He (Mr. Chorley, not the crocodile) wrote me a most kind and encouraging answer. I well believe him all as amiable and intellectual as you represent him ; upon my return to town I shall certainly visit him in my *mask*. When I do not know how to subscribe myself with all the warmth, yet respect, I feel, it is my habit simply to say—Yours,
'GEORGE DARLEY.'

Such letters as the foregoing were, to one of Miss Mitford's temperament, 'startling to receive . . . and terrible to answer.' That she did answer it is certain, for another letter to her from Darley, in which he apologises for the previous 'endless epistle,' is dated 23 December, 1836, and was written from his London address—27, Upper Eaton Street—and in 1841 we find Darley contributing to Finden's *Tableaux*, Miss Mitford being then the editor. The letter to Chorley to which Darley refers as having been written 'just before leaving London' was accompanied by a copy of *Nepenthe*, of which the author writes : 'Some friends have complained, naturally enough, that an

incomplete poem is rather unintelligible. I have, therefore, written explanatory headings; and may here add what is the general object or mythos of the poem: viz. to show the folly of discontent with the natural tone of human life. Canto I attempts to paint the ill effects of over-joy; Canto II, those of excessive melancholy. Part of the latter object remains to be worked out in Canto III, which would likewise show—if I could ever find confidence, and health, and leisure to finish it—that contentment with the mingled cup of humanity is the true “Nepenthe.” In a later letter to Chorley he refers to two poems that have been lost.

‘All my best thanks,’ he writes to his newly-made friend, ‘for your kind and careful remarks, which shall have my deepest consideration. They are the only ones I have ever yet obtained which enable me to turn my mind upon itself. Would they had come before I was dead in hope, energy and ambition! If the “Lammergeyer,” now ten years old, be ever published, it will owe to you much of any success it may obtain, though I have not the slightest belief it will ever take even a “very *low* place among our select romantic poems.” You are perfectly right about “Alboin.” The simple truth is, it was written as a mock-heroic tragedy, called “The Revisal,” by an imaginary mad dramatist, with a running prose critique by a manager, in which all your opinions of it were given. I, however, thought this plan foolish, and put one act into its present form, merely as an experiment, because it seemed to contain some few good lines. Whenever you please to put me in the chair, I promise to be as sincere as you, though not so judicious.’

In June, 1837, appeared *The Tribute*, published by Lord Northampton for the benefit of a man of letters who had fallen into poverty. Richard Monckton Milnes (Lord Houghton) was much interested in the publication, and succeeded in getting Alfred and Charles Tennyson to contribute to its pages, Alfred’s

contribution being the stanzas which formed the germ of *Maud*. Among the contributors were Sir Henry Taylor, Aubrey de Vere, Archbishop Trench, and Walter Savage Landor. To *The Tribute* Darley contributed the six 'Syren Songs,' which are reprinted in this edition. From an interesting paragraph in the Life of Lord Houghton we learn that 'Milnes spent the autumn of 1837 at Fryston entertaining various friends of his, amongst them being George Darley, . . . whose special reason for going to Fryston was to meet Tennyson.'

During the years 1838 and 1839 Darley published nothing of a literary nature, and appears to have written little save articles for *The Athenæum*. In 1840 he very reluctantly took Southey's place and contributed the introduction to an edition of the works of Beaumont and Fletcher. He did not edit the plays, as has been stated, but was responsible solely for the preface, the task of writing which he admits in a postscript came upon him at so late a period and found him 'so unprovided in materials, save those which casual reflection and most superficial research had brought together during indolent literary hours, that a few weeks' care can have accomplished little deserving acceptance.' Nevertheless, his remarks on the dramatists' style of versification are illuminating, and prove how very keen was his appreciation of verbal music. In 1840 Moxon published *Thomas à Becket*, a drama of which the author thought so highly that he playfully signed his name on more than one occasion 'Thomas à Becket Darley'! Both this and *Ethelstan*, which appeared in 1841, are a series of 'scenes for the study'; they were not written with a view to their being put on the stage. Successive failures seemed to have sapped the poet's belief in his powers, and we find him writing to Procter, to whose judgment he had submitted *Thomas à Becket*—

'I am indeed suspicious, not of you but myself; most sceptical about my right to be called "poet,"

and therefore it is I desire confirmation of it from others. Why have a score of years not established my title with the world? Why did not *Sylvia*, with all its faults, ten years since? It ranked me among the *small* poets. I had as soon be ranked among the piping bullfinches.

'Poets are the greatest or most despicable of intellectual creatures. What with ill-health, indolence, diffidence in my powers and indifference (*now*) to fame, I feel often tempted to go and plant cabbages, instead of sowing laurel seeds that never come up. Verily I court the mob's applause, and care about its censure as much as Coriolanus did; but unless selected judgments are edified, where's the use of writing for the All-seer's perusal and my own?

'Glad *Becket* pleases you so far, but dissatisfied (with myself, mind!) that it has only induced you to skim it. For Heaven's sake, unless it *force* you to read it thoroughly, cram it into the blazes! No poetic work that does less is worth a fig-skin.

'Many persons, as well as you, dislike *Dwerga*. To me it seems, of course, the highest creation in the work. I wrote it with delight, ardour, and ease; how, therefore, can it well be overwrought? which would imply artifice and elaboration. I *think* you'll like it better some time hence. T. Carlyle wrote me a characteristic letter; compares *Becket* to *Götz von Berlichingen*! and predicts vitality. Miss Mitford pronounces me Decker, Marlowe, and Heywood rolled into one! Others, too, are favourable, but see what my great friend, the editor of *The Athenæum*, has done for me.—A *whole* column of criticism, the censorer cutting the throat of the encomiast all through it! Have I served so long a poetical 'prenticeship to be fubbed off after this fashion?'

To this anxious inquiry 'there lives no record of reply,' but Procter possibly pleaded his arduous duties as Commissioner in Lunacy as an excuse for a short note in which he probably promised to deliver judgment a little later; but Darley was not to be thus put

off, and accordingly we find him a few days later writing to Procter with evident impatience :

‘DEAR MR. COMMISSIONER,

‘Confound your prose lunatics who leave you no time for inquiring upon poetic ones ! Or have you really looked over *Becket* and taken this tender way of telling me you don’t like it ? If you have *not* read it, for God’s sake do, and let me know in one word what you think of it. I don’t want an essay or good-natured reserve, neither ; but the single, bold word “good” or “bad”—anything except “indifferent”. If my drama cannot prove attractive to selecter judgments, what hope have I from the pig-headed public ? Never a word more will I write should *Becket* fail, except for periodicals and mutton-chops. When you can speak out on the subject I’ll eat and drink with you. Not till then !—Ever yours, poet or not,

‘*Thomas à Becket* DARLEY.’

Procter, in his personal sketches of his contemporaries, devotes to Darley a few lines in which he states that he was a writer of considerable power, and adds : ‘He was—without possessing ill-nature—of a sarcastic turn.’ Darley was not unconscious of this characteristic, though he was far from regarding it as a defect, for in one of some letters, still preserved, which he wrote to a cousin in Ireland, he says : ‘My feelings will vent themselves . . . or my own heart would burst. I never “hint” anything against any one, I speak my thoughts out plain, and rather pride myself on the pointedness of my sarcasm which cannot be mistaken. Venom will not rest with me ; I must spit it, and then am rid of it. Is not this better than to have it rankle and fester in my heart ?’

These letters show Darley in a most amiable, if not indeed in a most lovable light. With the girl-cousins he is alternately playful and serious, occasionally didactic, but at all times affectionately considerate ; and the relationship between the lonely man of letters eternally thirsting for intelligent sympathy, and the girls he corresponded with, resembles very closely that

between Epicurus and Leontion and Ternissa depicted in the most exquisitely beautiful of Landor's *Imaginary Conversations*. He writes thus to one of his 'dearest girls': 'Your opinion *raisonnée* of *Ethelstan* gives me especial pleasure, because it exhibits a discrimination rare among even the approvers of that work. They generally fix on the love-scenes, or inferior parts; it is a purified and elevated taste alone that perceives *Ethelstan* himself to be worth all the rest. Miss Edgeworth pronounces him a *murderer*, and rates me for endeavouring to throw any interest over such a *scélérat*! What can be expected from the critics after this?'

The preface to *Ethelstan* proves how conscientious an artist was Darley—

'These hands, unskilful as they are, would fain build up a Cairn, or rude national monument, on some eminence of our Poetic Mountain, to a few amongst the many Heroes of our race, sleeping even yet with no memorial there, or one hidden beneath the moss of ages. *Ethelstan* is the second stone, *Becket* was the first, borne thither by me for this homely pyramid; to rear it may be above my powers, but were it a mere mound of rubbish, it might remain untrampled and unscorned, from the sacredness of its purpose. And thus has remained my work already done; the meditative pilgrim has stopped to applaud my labour, the man of practice has bestowed on it a cold approval, as a profitless romantic project, too much out of the present taste, creditable to my dwarfish strength but demanding a giant's; while the busy world of wayfarers pass it by unseen. "Hope must be the portion of all that resolve on great enterprises." Yet the pursuit alone is pleasure, the completion oftentimes full reward, the mere aspiration towards an exalted object elevates, as with eternal wings: I have, moreover, been in many cases consoled by the enthusiasm of strangers for the indifference of friends; and should I complain under public neglect those high and honoured supporters might well exclaim, "Un-

grateful and undiscerning! to value promiscuous suffrage above our good opinions!" Such opinions are indeed a "portion" realised beyond any promise of Hope, and all power of Fortune: half the possible harvest is housed, which should, so far as regards *self*, content an ungrasping cultivator of his poetic field. A more comprehensive and divine ambition would wish to see its efforts generally beneficial, but of this half portion I fear to be still disappointed: it waits on genius as large as the ambition.'

Darley was doomed to disappointment so far as his poetic and dramatic efforts were concerned, and he was not content with the reputation he won by his mathematical works. These, in the case of his *Popular Algebra*, ran to a third edition, in that of his *System of Popular Geometry* to a fifth. That he should have failed as a poet to attract the notice he deserved is strange, for few discerning readers will dissent from the judgment pronounced on his work by *The Athenæum*, in which it was asserted:—

'That the attention which Mr. Darley's poems commanded has been unequal to their merits, every true lover of poetry to whom they are familiar will feel: for a true lover, as we understand the word, will allow for an almost bewildering exuberance of fancies, the offspring of self-indulgent loneliness—for occasional singularities of humour and language, as natural to one who had "commerced" so intimately with ancient literature—and for a knowledge of passion and insight into character, greater than such experience of life as leads the imaginative creator to prefer what is probable for his subjects and symmetrical in their elaboration. These peculiarities granted—there remain excursiveness of invention, vigour of expression, and delicious sweetness of versification—rare in any day—in right of which, the name of George Darley ought to stand high among the poets of his time.'

That he was not without recognition from his peers is proved by the fact that Tennyson urged him to

collect and publish all his poems. On his replying, 'The public don't care for them, and I cannot afford to lose by them,' Tennyson's answer was an offer to bear the expense. This generous offer Darley declined. It is possible that *Thomas à Becket* may have suggested to Tennyson the subject of his own *Becket*, for a copy of the former play recently sold by public auction bears the inscription: 'Alfred Tennyson from the Author.'¹

During the twenty-five years which Darley lived in England or on the Continent he seldom visited Ireland, though he kept up the pleasant correspondence with his cousins to which reference has already been made. His letters have been carefully preserved, and give a pleasing picture of the philosophic poet in his moments of leisure and expansion. The letters are usually signed 'Fadladeen' (a pet name given him by one of his cousins), and contain occasional glimpses of the writer and his contemporaries, and exhibit not a little of the poet's love for his native land. In reply to a question, he wrote (on 8 February, 1845), 'Alfred Tennyson the poet cannot well be —'s long ago friend, as he is still a young man; but I do recollect his once mentioning that Tennyson D'Eyncourt was a relative of his, I forget how near or distant. Alfred lives in a kind of genteel vagrancy, heaven knows where, or I would ask particulars.' Tennyson was then living in Cheltenham, and his name was not placed on the pension list until September, 1845. Of himself Darley writes in the same letter: 'You must have me issue a bulletin of my health, must you? as if it were of such consequence to the Empire! Well, Caliban was never racked by more pains and aches and petty tortures at Prospero's bidding than beset me from top to toe, but not one appears dignified enough for specification, tho' altogether disable me from strenuous continuous work. I can just now write such a note as this and no more. My business is at a stand

¹ This copy is now in my possession.—R. C.

thro' headache ; that's the reason I am and always shall be a poor devil. *N'importe.*'

In another letter he says : 'Imagination is as much a *gift of heaven* as common sense, and therefore should not be sneered at. The highest truths are reached by flights of imagination. The delicate and otherwise imperceptible shades of thought are discovered by flashes of that divine faculty, and would be gone forever if you sent slow-footed common sense at a careful jog trot after them. . . . Common sense and imagination are not incompatible, and their *union* forms a far better mind than either of them separate.'

Darley, notwithstanding his long residence in England, never ceased to love Ireland. In his letters he refers constantly to the scenes in which his childhood was passed, and one of his longer poems is a romantic ballad founded on Irish history. 'Do *you* remember,' he asks one of his fair correspondents as his thoughts revert to a brief holiday during which he visited Glendalough, 'the green deep slopes beyond St. Kevin's Bed running down aslant from the hill top into the lake, and the sun drops sparkling on the black surface of the water, and the three mermaidens that wiled with their songs another Anchorite almost out of his self-control and discretion? You forget all that, but he doesn't. Will such a day ever come again? Not, I fear, till the long, long night is over!' Towards the close of 1845 the tone of his letters became very despondent as his health, never very good, began to give way. 'I shall never,' he writes, 'be able to go through another London winter with any firmness. The sands of life indeed, I perceive, are beginning to crumble down within me, and will soon all run to dust. That is as it should be ; I little regret an existence which for me has very few attractions.' In his loneliness in London his thoughts revert to Ireland. 'Some of these fine days,' he declares, 'I intend settling myself in Ireland *pour toujours*, and becoming Bard of the Three Rock'd Mountains, and there you must

all minister comfort to my desolation like a bevy of angels to an Anchorite's, and must sing wild-bird songs at my gravestone near the Druid's altar.'

But at last even letter-writing became burthensome. On 30 May, 1845, he wrote: 'I am almost unable to scratch off this notikin, as for some nights sleep has not visited my wretched eyes, and their weariness is extreme. Yet it enlivens me and warms the chill blood about my heart to write, because it is like talking to you. Tell — I do feel somewhat better than when she received what she calls my "desponding" accounts, but that she must not think me at all in low spirits when I speak of my wished-for release from ill-health and all the other ills of life, altogether. To me that is quite a consolatory expectation. It would be piteous enough, indeed, were poor little — cut off so soon, at least if any one else cares much about her, *they* would be pitiable. But who cares much about Fadladeen? Oh yes, to be sure, you three—and some three more on this side of the water. My death would occasion no second Deluge after all, and, indeed, I scarce wish it to cause a single tear. Why should I desire to give pain after death who have given so much before it? Even had I done otherwise, it has always struck me as a strange selfishness, the desire of making our friends mournful and their hearts bleed on our account when we can no longer feel their sympathy.'

In the autumn and winter of 1845 Darley was in Italy and France. During this visit to the Continent, which he undertook as a contributor to *The Athenæum*, he suffered much from ill-health, and was detained in Paris from this cause for some weeks in the spring of 1846. He returned to England in March, and died of decline at 2 Belgrave Street South, St. George's, Hanover Square, London, on 23 November. He was buried in Kensal Green Cemetery. Miss Mitford in her *Recollections of a Literary Life* tells a melancholy story to the effect that Darley's death was even more lonely than his life, but happily she was

misinformed : the dying poet was most carefully and affectionately tended during his last days.

No portrait of the author of *Nepenthe* is extant, and we have therefore to content ourselves with such descriptions of him as have been written by those who knew him. One who knew him well thus describes him :

‘His figure was tall and graceful, his natural movements very striking as he walked ; his thoughts seemed to influence unconsciously every movement of his body. His manner had much dignity, and conveyed at once that he was a man of commanding intellect. His face was decidedly handsome, the features well cut, the forehead large, the mouth very expressive. The pale face bore a melancholy expression, and the intellect and imagination—both in constant exercise—left visible traces of their presence. . . . I frequently had the privilege of passing an evening with him during the years 1841, 1842, and 1843. I was then a student at Lincoln’s Inn. He took a lively interest in young men who came alone, as I did, to study in London, and wished to do all he could to influence them for good, and to place a high standard of conduct before them. His highly intellectual conversation was characterised by the utmost purity of tone and sentiment. I was much struck by the variety of his learning. He used to speak to me not only of Blackstone, but of Coke upon Littleton ; he had many quaint passages from the latter stored in his memory, and in argument would meet me with authorities taken from both.’

Canon Livingstone, in the Memoir which prefaces the volume of Darley’s Poems printed in 1890 for private circulation, says :

‘Carlyle used to quote Darley as an illustration of his theory that hesitation of speech is often associated with thoughtful natures. Darley’s lonely habits, engendered partly by this physical infirmity, must account in great measure for the failure of his genius to obtain the wide recognition it most surely deserved.

The charm of his personal appearance and manner still lingers in the memory of those who were privileged to know him, and when completely at ease in conversation with any congenial spirit, or reading aloud, or declaiming passages from his favourite Elizabethan authors, the defect in his speech disappeared.'

Another who was well acquainted with him describes Darley as having 'eyes not large but very earnest, with often a far-away expression; hair dark brown and waving,' and adds: 'His manner varied according to his mood and his companions. He was often somewhat of a Diogenes, silent and brooding, subject to fits of gloom and abstraction. At other times he would be vigorous and sarcastic. But when he chose it he could be a delightful companion, for he was brimful of knowledge, and steeped in poetry. His taste and feeling for music were exquisite.'

Of George Darley's brothers, Charles is the best known. He took orders, held several curacies in England, and became Professor of English Literature in Queen's College, Cork. He wrote a tragedy entitled *The Plighted Troth*, which was produced by Macready at Drury Lane, in 1842, but proved a failure. The cause of the failure is not very clear, though the matter is referred to in Macready's Diary.

RAMSAY COLLES.

EDITORIAL NOTE

I HAVE to thank Miss Evelyn Darley for the loan of the original editions of *Sylvia* and the rare *Nepenthe*, and for permission to print *The Sorrows of Hope*, which has never before been printed or published. My thanks are also due to Canon Livingstone of Shrewsbury, and to the Hon. Mrs. Livingstone, for answers to many queries, and for permission to reprint the poems published by them in 1890. Lord Tennyson has kindly assured me of the friendship which existed between the late Poet Laureate and George Darley, and has confirmed the story of Tennyson's offer to defray the expenses of an edition of Darley's Poems ; Lord Crewe has had a search made for letters from Darley to the late Lord Houghton, but without success ; and Mr. R. A. Streatfeild, the editor of a selection from Darley's poems, has kindly replied to one or two of my queries. Finally, I have to thank my friend, Edward Dowden, for the suggestion that I should edit this complete edition of Darley, and for his permission to dedicate the book to him. The text of Darley has suffered much in reprints. Mr. John H. Ingram's edition of *Sylvia* (Dent) is peppered with misprints, and where Mr. Streatfeild has followed him he has gone into many pitfalls. The six Syren Songs which are referred to in previous editions as being still in MS. are to be found in *The Tribute*, published in 1837, and are included in this volume.

THE ERRORS OF ECSTASIE

Fie ! on sinful Fantasie.

SHAKSPEARE.

SCENE—*A Woodland by Moonlight.*

A distant bell sounds, and ceases.

Enter MYSTIC.

MYSTIC.

AY—Peaceful !—Still !—

The sullen acclamation of the time
Yon Moon ascended to her midnight throne,
Hath died upon the gentle pulse of night ;
And borne amid the thronging courts of Heav'n,
Where lessening stars grow pale before the Queen,
Their saffron cheeks turn'd to cinereous white,
She rules supreme o'er all their singular fires.
High and sublime the radiant Empress treads
Her nightly bourne. With step too light to print
The starry wilderness, and far too soft
To wake rude clamour i' the tender air
Impress'd, she fleets in silent glory on,
Whilst the mute Heav'ns are hush'd beneath her foot,
And drowsy earth fore-plays the final doom.

'Tis a brave scene to fill a poet's eye.
Look how yon lordly pile of granite stands !
Heaving his monstrous shoulders at the moon,
Which she, the pale and melancholy Queen,
Smiling at earthly pride, scatters with tears
Of light ; and shedding her unequal'd gems,
In barren flow'rs to ope their starry eyes,

She leads the blaze down from the mountain-side
To the broad lake ; where shines a second Moon,
The formal mimic of her symmetry ;
More than her image ; lesser than herself ;
Real apparency, acting up to life ;
Each fleeting passion, answering to the time
The sympathetic spectre in the flood—
Smiles as she smiles, and saddens as she frowns.

A double moon ! and double every spark
That burns the out-blown curtain of the sky !
Methinks, one now might leap into the moon,
And scan the headlong altitude o' th' air,
Through the bright bosom of this hollow flood,
Where counterfeited heav'n looks blue and clear,
In the reflective mirror of its breast.

Hush ! hush ! speak low—we'll rouse the buried world—
How deep this total falling off from life !
No vital respiration shakes the air,
To tell suspensive wonder 'tis deceived ;
No motion marks the bare similitude
Of sleep to death ; nor fancy turns, to truth ;
But imitation drugs the visual sense
Up to diseased credulity, to think
That what it seems, it is. No forest nods,
Nor flower winks at the moon ; but cold and still,
The slumb'rous landscape, shrouded in the pale
And sheeted volume, sinks in visible death.

Through dusky glens now peeps the zenith Queen,
Raining her light upon the glittering turf ;
White hoods are thick upon the dale ; the fir
Lights all its prickly spires ; and the tall reeds,
Sharpen'd with visionary cusps of steel,
In scatter'd groups, gleam down the silver vales.

Hist !—not a sound—the dead sleep not as sure.—
Ev'n tremulous herbs that sigh'd in summer gales,
And bow'd to every breeze that crept the lea,
Grow stark—and through their indulcedinous leaves
The clear wind sweeps in silent passage by,
Nor dares to ruffle the light thistle-down,

The sear moss, nor the flimsy gossamer ;
 Or meeting with some arrogant promontory,
 Some resty pine, the cradle of the blast,
 That erst might waken its tempestuous breath,
 And with contending and alternate arms,
 Which borrow their behaviour from the winds,
 Nurse up a violent and racking storm—
 The crouching breeze its dreadful anger hides,
 And scarce constrain'd to smother sweet revenge,
 Breathes a low murmur and then dies away.

Such is the sovereign stillness of the time !
 Such is the grand ovation of the Moon !
 Her footsteps strown with heaps of glittering flowers,
 She walks beneath the sublime arch o' the world,
 In calm, and bright, and deep serenity.

The curtain's fall'n ; the busy scene is done ;
 Actors and audience quit the tiresome play ;
 And life's sad pageantry forgets to move.
 Silence and vacancy possess the stage ;
 Peace and Tranquillity sit mute around.

Why then, when all is still, wilt thou not rest,
 My soul, and drink th' oblivion of the scene ?
 Is't not the type of man's eternal state ?
 The symbol of futurity—that safe retreat,
 Which pitiful Mercy gave for all our woes ?
 Why then not taste anticipative joy ?

Joy !—joy !—what joy ?—Is joy, defect of woe,
 Such as vacuity of sense affords ?—
 What joy—if sleep indeed be temporal death,
 Its symbol and its type ? Sleep is not joy !
 'Tis impercipient ! Certainly. Nor woe !
 What is it then ? Mental annihilation—
 And death, its antitype, is nothing more.

Annihilation !—dark !—and everlasting !—
 Why this were well ! I could exchange for this.
 O ! how I long to throw this passion off !—
 And what so prompt ? so near ? The pilfering breeze,

That robs the scented valley of its sweets,
 And ravishes the poor, defenceless flowers,
 Wing'd by velleity, can scarce o'ersweep
 A few poor measures of the earth, i' the hour
 'Tis swift'st ; while I—by a little, little step,
 And shrewd addition of the coffin-sheet,
 To keep me from the shivering touch of earth,
 Can pass—from world to world ! This is most well.

To stand—thus pinion'd, on the outside brink
 Of the fool's horror, the dull cave of death,
 That hides away the fleeing heav'ns—the gaze
 Of pitiless-hearted pitiers ;—to stand—
 Loaden with weighty griefs and sallow cares,
 Press'd by misfortunes innate and acquired,
 And ere youth's rose hath summer'd on its stalk,
 Turn'd to a wretched weed, wither'd and pale,
 Stung by a venomous blast that bites my core,
 Sickmess—which binds me with an aching crown,
 Encircling with its drowsy weight my head ;
 Last, Poverty, upon a carrion steed,
 Cheering his bleak dogs, Hunger and Nakedness,
 With slaughter-red mouths, and sharp remorseless fang-,
 To tear my flesh, to strip my houseless form,
 Lap my cold blood, and hunt me to my grave.—
 To stand, I say—this world upon my back,
 Galling my un-atlantic shoulders ; these fell dogs
 Close at my heels pursuing—and the next
 Small fluxion of the longitude of time,
 My burthen hurl'd, back to th' injurious skies,
 My grim tormentors baffled in the teeth,
 To rest in senseless quiet, joyless ease,
 In the short compass that a corpse can measure,
 Laid stretch'd upon th' eternal bed of silence,
 Pent up in futile boards or chok'd with clay.
 Excellent ! Ha ! ha ! ha ! ha !
 I'll do't ! I'll do't.—

—Why what a fool was I
 To whine and weep, and play with tribulation,
 When th' cure lies in a phial or a pill !
 Now, now ye hideous band, ye coward crew,
 That bend your horrors on a wretch like me,

Where's your dominion now? Your terrors where?
Down with that sceptre, thou tyrannic fool,
That sways it o'er my health! Stand back—stand back,
Yellow-eyed Melancholy and black Despair,
The gulf is at your foot! And thou, thin Poverty,
Charm off thy dogs, and pull thy courser's neck
Down to his knee! Insatiate! What? Wilt follow me
From yon dread cliff that breaks the midway air
Into yon gorge? Perdition gapes beneath,
And stretches wider its immoderate jaws
For thee and these.

Ha! ha! ha! ha!

Have I appall'd thee, fiend?

Dar'st thou not follow me?

'Tis well! Begone!

There is your cease. There my redemption lies.
I'll leap 't! though sooty hell should grin beneath,
Or thunder roll above, to shake the Mercy-seat!

Ha! What a chain was there! Hell—Thunder—God!—
Yes. God! God! The calculating atheist
Who reckons on the sleeping bolts of Heav'n,
Under the tremour of whose cloudy bed
Minor impiety doth walk unblasted,
Whispers "There is no God"—and trembles.
There is a God! This truth, the gilded heav'ns,
Where numberless immensurable bodies roll,
Systems on systems, universe on universe,
Each comprehending an ubiquity,
And all swung round the centre of infinity
By the dread impulse of Omnipotence—
Omnipotence declare! This truth, dumb Earth
Speaks out! and Ocean, o'er its undulant flood,
O'er roaring eddies swallowing the mad billows,
And hollow rocks beaten with resonant echoes,
This truth—borne on the plural voice o' the waves—
Mountain-back'd Ocean, heaving to the shout,
Prolongs in doubling thunders round its vasty shores.

If, then, God is—and else, we, conscients, are not—
The question's double-tongued. First: are we sole
Proprietors of our lives, or debtors to His will?
Then: is futurity seen as a dark dream,

Barely a dream? or prescience of a truth?
 This, this is the hinge of doubt. Decided—
 The former falls to naught. For who can moot,
 If we shall live hereafter, that we owe
 God our determination? But if not,
 Annihilation chops us from our bond,
 Whether 'tis due to God, or to ourselves.

Futurity!—to live for ever—ay—
 Why that were to be God! It cannot be.
 The attributes of God are His alone,
 And one, Eternity. It cannot be.
 Yet—is not Reason one?—and we are rational!—
 Certainly. 'Tis but equality in 's attributes,
 Which is impartible to nothing second;
 We may be both eternal, yet not equal
 Ev'n in that quality—False!—false!—Eternities
 Are infinite, and therefore not unequal—
 Yet soft—Infinity's sophistical—
 Eternity henceforward, cannot equal
That, and eternity behind. *That's* ours;
 The sum of both is His—O! whither, whither,
 Will metaphysic meditation lead me?
 Perplexity! Confusion! Contradictions!
 Doubts that would puzzle deity itself,
 A Chaos in the intellectual World!

Ah! why is this? ah! wherefore—why is this?
 If I am disregarded of sweet Charity,
 If Heav'n has let me down the winds of Chance,
 The rack and light leaf of its termagant blasts,
 Whilst Mercy flies my deprecating arms,
 And ruthless Pity laughs at all my tears;
 Since Hope—who first my young ambition led,
 Following with eager step her protean form
 Through every permutation of variety—
 Since Hope, ev'n Hope, deserts me, and recedes
 Into the frail material of the air
 Mid dying hues and melancholy signs,
 With her last finger pointing to the grave—
 Since thus I am—why should I be at all?
 Why should I breathe superfluous existence?
 And wherefore these indefinite terrors fling
 O'er the sole act which can absolve me now?

I am the wretched'st thing beneath the moon !
 O ! hast thou no quiescent for the mind ?
 Sweet Exorcist ! thy bland rebuke, erewhile
 Was wont to lay my rebel spirits deep
 I' the liquid o' thy vast diffusion !
 Come ! I will gaze my state into a dream.

I seem like one lost in a deep blue sea,
 Down, down beneath the billows many a mile,
 Where nought of their loud eloquence is heard,
 Save a dead murmur of the rushing waves
 Fleeting above, more silent than no sound.
 Over my head, as high as to the moon,
 The tall, insuperable waters rise,
 Pure and translucent ; through whose total depth
 The imminent stars shoot unrefracted rays,
 And whiten all the bottom of the flood.
 The sea-bed hath a scenery of its own,
 And nought less wondrous than the realms of air :
 Hills, dells, rocks, groves, sea-flow'rs, and sedgy caves,
 In crystal armour lock'd—scatter'd around !
 Here, like a mortal tenant of the sea,
 Or fabulous merman, hermit o' the wave,
 I stand, the sad surveyor of the scene,
 Alone, amid the deserts of the deep.—

Hist !—Ocean hath no sadness equal this ;
 It calls me up to life—— [*A nightingale sings.*]

O God ! O God ! Such notes might turn to tears
 Promethean eyes of clay—O piteous ! piteous ! [*Weeps.*]
 Soft !—Dead again—then Music's i' the grave !
 Like a nocturnal requiem it hath pass'd
 Or spiritual adoration of the Moon.
 Let me take up the melancholy strain
 Of worship, which th' harmonious bird hath left ;
 Sweet ! shall I be thy nightingale,
 Weetless albeit of melody so rare ?
 Come now ! I'll woo thee in such latter strains,
 Thine own Endymion could not wake before.

Nymph o' the lily brow ! on whose pale cheek
 Th' unrighteous rose——

MOON.

Endymion !

MYSTIC.

Ha !—Did'st call?—

Who? Who?—

Some voice !—some melancholy voice !—

An angel sings i' the Moon !—

'St ! 'st !—

No more.—

Is't possible?—

No, no.—Plato's a dreamer !—no—

What then?—

Are trees grown vocative, or do the reeds

Publish the secret whispers of the breeze

So verbally?—

O—'twas but Memory

Re-echoing through the chambers of the brain

My own late words.—

The woodland's lock'd in sleep—

Or if ought breaks the universal quiet,

'Tis when the mutable and soft-wing'd palms,

Grown pendulous with the silvery breath o' the moon,

Trickle from leaf to leaf.—

Perchance 'tis now,

Those dubious voices o' the canorous vault,

Perishing in their softness—come ; they, who

Tuning seraphic viols undefined,

Sing nightly i' th' involuntary air?

No, no—their music hath no syllables ;

Dumb sweetness, without sense ; mere euphony ;

Articulation swims upon the ear,

Touching but not impressing ; as the light

Silk feather doth the wave.—

'Twas fancy—ay—

Nothing but fancy—fancy—fancy—ay.—

MOON.

My nightingale !

MYSTIC.

I dream ! I dream !

MOON.

No dream

Had ever such coherency, to make
The visionary sleeper lend his ear
To phantom whisp'ers, fleeting ere they tell
Their endless stories out.
Art thou not he, by name implicative
Mystic, the darkly-thinking son of Mystery?

MYSTIC.

Here !—

I am call'd !—and by a sound
Of more immediate excitation
Than the pungent'st "Hail"
Ere breath'd by mortal man.—

Yes—yes, dread summoner !

I have heard of this.—
They say, when the vex'd spirit hath fulfill'd
The utmost plenitude of human woe,
The Heav'ns in pity oft revoke their gift,
And send their repetition by the breath
Of airy-footed messengers.
It chimes well with my first purpose
Changed through terrors ; now
Uncertainty's mad certain.

I render me, angelical !

MOON.

Enthusiast !
Wilt listen to me? Say?

MYSTIC.

Sweet sound ! sweet sound !
Listen? O ! ay,
If ecstasie will down.
Listen? Such notes,
So melancholy, grand,
'Tween dirge and anthem, play
When all the heav'nly minstrels do attend
The burial of an angel !

MOON.

O—thy fantasie, thy fantasie indeed
Takes liberty beyond all bourne of licence.

MYSTIC.

Sweet seraph ! Charm my soul
Out through the latent channels of mine ear.
'Twill follow fascination such as this,
Up to the top of infinite altitude.

MOON.

Still

Thou deal'st in wild transcendencies of leave.
But come ! Wilt answer without parody
Of poetry ; itself a parody
Of plain propriety ?

MYSTIC.

Gordius, bind my tongue from slipp'riness !
Come on, sweet Spirit ! Come !
Thou tremulant dictator o' sweet syllables !
Hosann'er !

MOON.

Poor errant worm ! that sparklest i' the dusk
Of a most gloomy vale ;
What dost thou here, amid th' unwholesome damps
O' the breathing earth ?

MYSTIC.

'Tis as I feign'd.
Thou fair Attraction, take me to thy sphere,
Where sages say most blessed spirits dwell ;
This dark, material world is all too rough,
Too full o' painful ways and ruggedness,
For tender-natured souls.

MOON.

Seek not to lay
The accusation of thine own neglect
In mastering passions much o'er-sensitive,
To guiltless things.

The wailing reed that blows i' the gusty vale,
Sighs not more piteously, than thou
At every breath of woe.

MYSTIC.

Ev'n thus.

Yet say, thou bright Communicant !
Whose spacious path doth span this circular air,
Doth not thine eye, though haply circumscribed
By partial vision, yet brim o'er with tears,
At sight of this most miserable world ?

MOON.

Alas ! Alas ! Mine eye hath oft been dimm'd
Indeed, with lamentable drops. I've seen
Such piteous acts, that I have sought to veil,
And blest the dark transgression of the clouds
Which hid me from such woes.

Partial ! Oh, no !

Mine eye hath seen too much.

I deck the pall,
Which Night spreads over many a tombless corse,
Stretch'd on the desert sands, or distant shores,
With all my best of brightness.

O, I weep,

Weep ev'n to dissolution, when I see
Wand'ring near some lone monument, far, far
From his poor maiden, her dear lover lorn ;
(My memory wears the scarf of sorrow yet,
And paints in tears his image on my brain) ;
Down sits he on th' uncomfortable stone,
His breast uncased to th' acrimonious winds,
Thinking on her he loves ; speaks not, but sits
Filling his gentle bosom with his tears ;
Kisses the wind that seems to blow to home,
Loads it, a faithless messenger, with sighs ;
Then looks he in my face, endeavouring
To catch some false resemblance of his love—
I smile, he sighs ; I brighten, and he droops ;
Then, hopeless, heartless, bitterly lies down,
And all his burial lamentations are my tears.

Each hour I mourn some wretchedness like this—
Mercy !—

Ev'n now amid th' Italian wave
There plunged a reckless, white-invested thing !—
She sinks—alas !—and o'er the heedless waves
Roll silently ; now—now again she floats—
But stretch'd and senseless, like a sheet of foam,
And screaming sea-fowl pluck her dainty form.

MYSTIC.

O misery ! O misery !

MOON.

But yet I deem those most notorious deeds
Spring rather from th' uncircumscribéd range
Of individual passion ; thine own woes
Seem but th' effect of voluntary fault,
Neglecting thy more active energies,
Which fill the cup and spread the board of life,
To follow vain, seductive Meditation.

MYSTIC.

The Heav'ns have cursed me with a poet's eye !
An ear that will find an audience for sweet sounds
Though the soul pay in sad, compensate tears ;
The portion of divinity within
(If such it be, by dark prescription old)
Much turn'd to contemplative sadness ; which
Can find a further to most thoughts, and views
All, through the dark glass of its melancholy.

I'm framed, the fool of Sensibility !
I cannot see a young flow'r i' the grass
Smile at my foot which kills it in its prime,
And yet not think of undeservéd death ;
I cannot look ascaunt the mighty deep,
Shaking the firm strand with its plangent waves,
And cry, "'tis good in faith," or "sooth 'tis fair,"
But my whole spirit rushes through my eyes,
And mingles with the motion of the flood,
The blind tumultuations of the main ;

Nor yet subsides, with the subsiding sea,
But tasks invention to out-measure nature,
And puts imagination to the stretch
In framing vast ideas of the Deluge.

MOON.

Ay ! there the error cries
Like to the blood of Abel, from the ground,
For Heav'n to punish him who gave it out.

MYSTIC.

Veil'd spirit ! must I then untune my soul,
Or make it vibrate with unnatural pulse ?
What ! shall I tell the nightingale, "Be dumb !
Thou speak'st not sweeter language than the jay,
Or any other ruffian-throated bird
Which strangles sound in noise" ?
Shall I apostrophize the busy stream,
That, quarrelling with its testy pebbles, brings
Such liquid modulations out of stones
As might ashame the lutes of seraphim,
With "Cease, thou babbler ! Prithee, grate no more
Upon thy file-fraught bed ; the stridulous saw
Shatters the ear with lesser dissonance" ?

MOON.

Ah ! thou fantastical !

MYSTIC.

No—let the Heav'ns, which gave me constitution
As passible as dust or fluency,
Answer its evil tendency ; not I.
I cannot shut my senses if I would ;
And when sense feels, reflection comes perforce,
For sense is but the motive of the mind.

MOON.

Thou o'er-contemplative !
Lost in a labyrinth of Ecstasie,
More intricate and perilous to the mind,
To 'scape its mesh, than Crete's was to the body.

Ecstasie, rash production of the thoughts
 To what right sanity would never lead,
 Doth spread a dark confusion o'er the brain
 Of false creations, wild and fabulous,
 Vain dreams, perplexities inexplicable,
 Misty conceits, and phantom imagery ;
 From one poor thought, conjures a host of forms,
 Irrelevancies sur-exaggerates,
 And lost in such fantastic combinations,
 Differs from madness scarcely by a line.

MYSTIC.

Fair monitress ! is Genius nothing more ?
 Yet Genius is exalted feeling—

MOON.

Yes,

Exalted, but not sightless.
 Builds not presumptuous Babels, out of size,
 Till reason topple down. Seeks not, to climb
 The unraught heav'n of infinite Conception
 Intangible, like Titan's phrenetic son,
 Piled mountain tottering on unstable hill,
 The site of eminent Jove ; the fable's pat
 For those who will to profit, and apply
 Its moral to the brain.

There is a scale
 Of intellectual feeling, graduate
 Through indivisible and invisible parts,
 Each different yet partaking of the next,
 From apathetic dulness to insanity ;
 The common-sense o' th' world poaches i' th' former,
 But Ecstasie's near neighbour to the last ;
 Genius, or Fancy its more passionate name,
 Lies equally between. Here, thou 'st transgress'd ;
 And, here transgressing, thou dost pay the penalty :
 Dulness itself is happier than thou.

MYSTIC.

Why then I'll pray the Heav'ns to strike me surd !
 To paralyze the techy nerves o' the brain,
 Dry up the tubes and organs of sensation,

And turn my heart to preferable stone !
 I'll rob the ditch-roots of their lazy pith,
 The green ores of their nocuous potency,
 Mix the narcotic juices for a drink,
 To kill the fine vibrations of the brain,
 And dull the vigilant sense to lethargy ;
 I'll rid their keen perceptions from each nerve,
 Choke up their pores with unctuous pharmacies,
 Grow fat and fatuate, heartless and heart-free !
 Since to be dull is surely to be happy.

MOON.

Still in extremes !

MYSTIC.

Hear me, sweet Spirit !

 Though I stand
 A pensive, poor, and visionary boy,
 With bloodless cheek, in shudd'ring attitude,
 The bitter salutation of the night,
 Thus ; like a rigid statue—or, more like,
 A living representative in stone,
 A wretched mockery of the human form,
 Wishing for some impetuous thunderbolt
 To scatter me beyond the ken of God,
 Beyond the hope or pow'r of resurrection,
 The chance of future bliss appropriate,
 I would not change the temper of my blood
 For that which stagnates in an idiot's veins,
 To gain the sad salvation of a fool.

MOON.

Thou wilful, passionate, and eccentric boy !
 With faculties, if well applied, sufficient
 To make ev'n thy most sensitive nature happy,
 Yet by perverse and wilful overdoings,
 Turning thy gifts to utter damnatives.
 How in thy "metaphysic meditations,"
 Thy shrewd refinements on Eternal Justice,
 And holding subtle commune with thy thoughts
 On death, futurity, annihilation,
 How hast thou 'scaped from stumbling on this truth,

A by-word with the most unthinking clowns,
EXTREMES ARE EVER WRONG?

Is't wise,
When Winter pinches with too sharp a nail,
And binds the sinews in its rigorous grasp,
To forthwith tread the metal of a furnace?
Doth it become the counsel of a fool,
Or headlong petulance of infancy,
When Summer kisses with a strumpet's lip,
And shoots intemperate ardour through the veins,
To plunge in Cydnus' floods incontinent,
And cure by deadly contrariety?
Wouldst thou not call a very dog unwise,
Who thus could shame mere instinct by such folly?
Speak ! Answer !

MYSTIC.

Lose my blushes in thy pale.

MOON.

Is there no mean, no golden mean of action,
Which kept, leads on to happiness and joy?
Are you not made with Passions and with Reason,
One to incite, the other to restrain,
And both necessitous to ordinate Liberty?
If Man was nought but mortal mechanism,
Turn'd at the will and pleasure of the artist,
Where lies his liberty? If he was left
To the rough domination of his passions,
What would the emblem of its spirit be?

Go, stand upon the turbid water's edge,
And view the hideous figure in the stream
Made by its quivering mirror. Obvious starts
A horrid face, in shadowy channels torn ;
Its flickering features, varying types of fiends,
Work through the several fashions of deform ;
The hair flies tortuous, like a knot of snakes
In restless agitation of their kind ;
Whilst the drawn optics, darting oblique flames,
Fright the abused spectator from the scene.

O ! how unlike, the beauteous image smiles,
In yon pure, motionless, and peaceful lake !
This, is the model of a healthful mind ;
That, the less terrible spectre of th' insane.

But wherefore seek for parables abroad,
When the reality is found at home ?
Look at thyself, the plaything of thy Will,
Mad in thy ecstasies, a fool in tenderness,
Fantastical beyond all reach of rule,
Romantic ev'n to very girlishness,
And impious too, in spite of " Meditation " ;
Giving to Passion such imperial sway,
As turns thy Reason's sceptre to a straw,
And makes him the dishonour'd satellite of Fancy.
Hence comes thy misery. Answer, if you can.

MYSTIC.

Confession takes the best half of my words.
My sorrows are my sins I've oped my breast
Unheedingly to Virtue's combatants,
Ransom'd my feelings at the price of Reason,
To Vice betray'd the bulwarks of my rest.
Heav'n leaves the citadel it cannot save,
And Hell lets loose its minions to destroy.

MOON.

Not so, not so. Thou art not just the fiend
Thy own, yet hyper-ordinate Fancy, makes thee.
Thy passions may be evil in degree,
And yet not so in very quality.
A Poet (thus, for comfort, let me call thee,)
Is never such a devilish friend to vice,
Mistaken, but not utterly malignant.
Neither will Heav'n desert him at the need.

MYSTIC.

Dear inspiration of my better thoughts !
Is't not desertion, total casting-off,
When I am thus a debtor to such shreds
For covering, that the shroud looks comfortable ?
When the crackling skin scarce keeps the skeleton,

And the famish'd blood grows thin and ichorous?
When the rootless hair drops from the skull—

Look here !—

Give me a dart and grave-cloth in my hand,
For I am Death's pale vicar upon earth !
Methinks this dell's a mighty sepulchre,
And I the grim memento i' the midst ;
Yon moon hath come to light the general vault,
Whilst miserable torches gleam on high ;
The dead sleep fast below—

MOON.

Now this is Ecstasie,

Not wise—

MYSTIC.

Ah ! villainous—damn'd—Satanic error !

Yes ! But I'll curb this hellish spirit, till
It rides i' the ring, strait—

Moloch gorge me else !

Yet say, dark Brightness ! in mere, répent prose,
Must not Heav'n alienate the hearts of men,
When Charity apostatizes thus,
To pamper Knavery in the common streets,
Whilst real Misery hides ?

MOON.

Didst thou not quit,
Most rash, most unadviséd, and most vain,
No proferable cause asserted why,
The track which sober Wisdom pointed out,
And plain Experience 'stablish'd as the true,
Th' ascent to riches, happiness, and fame,
Didst thou not barter Science for a song ?
Thy gown of Learning for a sorry mantle ?
The student's quiet for the city's din ?
At once—thy social duty, to assist,
By rational pursuits, the common good,
Bound in thine own—for selfish Fantasie
Useless to others, fatal to thyself ?

If this thou didst, why slander Providence ?
Is Heav'n obliged to pander to thy faults ?
You have deserted Heav'n ; *you* sought for Woe ;

Bit by vermicular Ambition, *you*—
You—with the grub of Poesy in your brain,
 Citing you on with insane avarous tooth
 To sate cupiety of praise—*you* left yourself ;
 Or in thy own mad, monster-making language,
 You left Philosophy i' the mire ; dismiss'd
 Prudence, to keep companions with the dull ;
 Leagued with Ambition, Poetry, and Pain ;
 Chose Misery out of hell, and call'd him Brother.

MYSTIC.

Bright Truth ! I grew weary of the dull,
 Undeviating, dusty road of Science,
 Vacant o' beauty, barren o' sweetness ;
 I thought—deceptible, ah ! too deceptible—
 The true Elysium lay within the mind
 Fill'd with th' amaranthian flow'rs of Fantasie
 O ! could'st thou feel, as Poets only feel,
 In such retreat of spirit from the body,
 Thou'dst spurn a habitation in the sky,
 To share beatitude beyond divine !

MOON.

What ! and pay Poet's price, in consequence ?

MYSTIC.

There lies the Heathen's Shadowy Vale of Bliss !
 There fiction turns to authenticity !
 Eternal murmuring of soft hidden rills,
 Eternal low susurring of warm winds
 Puffing amid the flow'ry finger'd groves,
 Sound in the deeply-listening ear of Fancy ;
 Eternal viridant vesture i' the fields,
 Eternal bloom of bright-complexion'd flow'rs
 Breathing their souls of fragrancy around,
 Fill the capacious measure of an eye,
 Companion to th' imaginative soul.

These are the dear creations of the brain,
 Which copy in mere thought substantial things,
 And stand most credibly for all their joys ;
 Till stern Reality returns again

Ev'n in the very summit of belief,
 Bursts the poor veil of fond forgetfulness,
 And with its cruel dissipation
 Scatters the lovely dream.
 Thus am I sadly, sadly undeceived.

MOON.

Too late, too late for preterite occasion !
 Thy Fortune's past amid thy sleep of Reason.
 But yet, droop not, Young Latter-Love of mine !
 (For I am not so heedless of sweet praise
 Ev'n in my eminent divinity,
 But I could list thy amorous adoration
 Of this pale cheek, and thy most legal scorn
 Of that same strumpet-flow'r, "th' unrighteous rose,"
 Whose bloom I love not. At thy plaintive call
 Wept in such winning breath, I bow'd and came.)

Though present life afford no chance of joy,
 This be thy consolation and thy hope :
 HEAVEN'S DOORS STAND OPEN FOR THE MISERABLE,
 MERCY SHALL REIGN, AND JUSTICE SHALL BE DONE !

No more ! My words are past, my lips are seal'd.

MYSTIC.

Not thus ! not thus ! Ah ! do not leave me thus.

MOON.

See'st thou not yon red cloud upon thy plane,
 Just in the eye o' the east ? The van of day
 Burns on its brow. Th' ascension's in its prime,
 And soon shall see my fall. I fade ! I fade !

MYSTIC.

O stay !—one moment yet—O render me
 One poor response—

MOON.

Haste then. I fade ! I fade !
 The flow'rets are rathe risers ; curious ears—
 I would not have them blow my words adown
 Th' intelligent, tell-tale winds awaken'd.

Yare !

MYSTIC.

Pale Sister of the flagrant God of Day !
 More sweet than that intemperate Lord of Fire,
 Shaking redundant radiance from his hair !
 Say, shall I die, when I do die ? Shall Fame
 Breathe no proud anthem over me ?

MOON.

Farewell !

I must not speak—Morn comes—Earth wakes—Farewell !

MYSTIC.

Ah ! yet—ah ! cruel—say—

MOON.

Farewell ! Farewell !

MYSTIC.

One word ! one little word ! ah ! say—

MOON.

Farewell !

POEMS

LOVE AND WINE

AROUND this naked brow of mine
No laurels in close chaplet lie,
Parnassus laughs with all his flow'rs
At such a tuneless Bard as I.
For me, no vagrant blossom dares
Slily to cheat the vigil Nine,
But jeer and flout my steps assail—
Yet will I sing of Love and Wine.

Come ! let the plunder'd rose look pale,
Whil'st Halcyone's cheek its colour wears,
Fast let the brimming charger pour,
And stain my bowl with sanguine tears.
Thus whilst I drain the gold mouth'd cup,
And press its blazing lip to mine,
Challenged by love-appellant eyes,
I'll sing the joys of Love and Wine.

LET THE BEAKER STAND !

LET the beaker stand !—My blood's in flames !
Fed by th' ethereal spirit of the vine,
No more !—I have sprung where Genius claims
Dominion next to prophecy,
Where souls of inspiréd Bards do hie ;
But nought beyond that latter cup, which made this glory
mine,
Belongs unto the Nine,
I'll quaff a softer, lovelier juice—there's madness in the wine !

Bind me a wreath, my blooming boy !
Of crimson buds, and Venus' lovely tree,
Of snow-capped lilies, bursting into joy,
At twining blood-roses and myrtles for me.
Spread me a couch too, and spread it of sweet flowers,
Spread me it broad, that the Nymph may recline ;
Yet blush not ye roses, though, mid these dark bowers,
She dare, e'en to press her dewy lip to mine.

Love is the breath that blest Saints sigh,
 On am'ranth beds, the heav'nly streams among,
 Yet nought unholy's whisper'd i' the sky,
 Though flow'rs grew, expressive, or streams found a tongue.
 Spread me a couch then, and spread it of sweet flowers,
 Spread me it broad, that the Nymph may recline ;
 Yet droop not, ye lilies, though, mid these dark bowers,
 She dare, e'en to press her downy cheek to mine.

Hark !—in the boughs, the wind-lyre sings
 Of broken hearts—its voice is lovers' sighs ;
 And ever as burst the sorrows of its strings,
 A lost maid laments ! or a luckless lover dies.
 Spread me a couch then, and spread it of sweet flowers,
 Spread me it broad, that the Nymph may recline ;
 Yet sigh not, sweet Æol, though, mid these dark bowers,
 She dare, e'en to press her snowy breast to mine.

THOU HAST SLEPT, O LYRE !

To Mrs. —

THOU hast slept, O Lyre !
 Yet the wild stream weepeth
 The wingéd hours away,
 And the vale-flower under her bonnet peepeth,
 To ensnare thy praise for her beauteous attire,
 Sing again, sweet Lyre, I pray.
 " Let the blue rills mourn,
 And the flowers cease wooing
 My silent chords—in vain !
 Their still soul wakes not to such petty suing,
 But thy fingers along my strings shall burn,
 If thou'lt sing to thy Love again."

My Love !—At thy pray'r,
 Let the slumb'ring minions
 Of lyral song arise !
 And heav'n-born fame on angelical pinions,
 Mounting the springy volumes of the air,
 Tell her beauty to the skies !

In my breathing bow'rs,
 Where the sighing willow,
 And wild vine o'er my bed,
 Shadowing mine own ambrosial pillow,
 Shall lull thee with sighs o' murmuring flow'rs,
 Sweet Lady, rest thy head.

Round the fragrant couch
 Where thy dear form resteth,
 Th' ensanguin'd flow'r shall lie,
 And the dearest theme with which Heav'n investeth
 A poet's soul, and a minstrel's touch,
 My Lyre to thine ear shall sigh.

When my goblet foams
 For thy lip to press it,
 Bedew'd by breath of thine,
 Reach me mine hallowéd bowl to kiss it,
 Whilst o'er, the spirit of thy sweetness roams,
 And to nectar turns the wine.

And oh ! when I kneel
 At thy bosom's altar,
 Where heav'n's own incense lies,
 When mine eye doth swim, and my tongue doth falter,
 Seeking to tell what my pulse doth feel,
 Shall my lip drink nought but sighs ?

Ah me ! if that breast
 Might enthrone my slumbers,
 Lull'd by thy voice divine,
 My Lyre would forget her reckless numbers,
 For such spell might charm to eternal rest
 Souls, far less warm than mine.

But my laurel mourns,
 And my Lyre sings, " Willow ! "
 The knell when love doth die ;
 For thy cheek doth press another's pillow,
 And my soul for a second LAURA burns,
 Though a humbler PETRARCH I.

THE REBELLION OF THE WATERS

THE Sea, in tremendous commotion, calls on its tributary streams for succour, whilst Triton blows his threatening conch in vain. Simois and Scamander, awake from their dream of ages, into pristine glory, and the floods subside not even at the rebuke of Neptune.

“ARISE !—the Sea-god’s groaning shell
Cries madly from his breathless caves,
And staring rocks its echoes tell
Along the wild and shouting waves.
Arise ! awake ! ye other streams,
That wear the plains of ruin’d Troy,
Ida’s dark sons, have burst their dreams,
And shake the very hills for joy.”

Press’d by the King of Tides, from far
With nostril split, and blood-shot eye,
The web-foot minions of his car
Shriek at the wave, they lighten by.
The noise of total hell was there,
As fled the rebel deeps along ;
A reckless, joyous prank they dare,
Though thunder fall from Neptune’s tongue.

COME, AND SEE !

Come, and see !
Thou, who never think’st to find
Pleasure for the dainty eye
In rural scenery ;
Thought how false ! and eye how blind !
Come, and see !—The hills, the woods,
The valleys, and the rolling floods,
“Come, and see !” are all a-saying,
All be-word their pray’r, with praying
“Come, and see !
Prithee, come, and see !”

Come, and see !
How the summer-valley lies,
Painted all in colours sheen,

Red, yellow, blue, and green,
 With a thousand other dyes ;
 Where the little merry bee
 Danceth to the minstrelsie
 Of the meadow-bells a-ringing,
 And be-words their song, with singing
 "Come, and see !
 Prithee, come, and see !"

Come, and see !
 How the sleepy willows look
 With their heads laid i' the stream,
 Where silver minnows gleam,
 Rowing up and down the brook ;
 Where the dank reed, river-born,
 Blows its melancholy horn
 To the whimperin' waves a-creeping,
 And be-words their woe, with weeping
 "Come, and see !
 Prithee, come, and see !"

Come, and see !
 How the sylvan feathers wave
 On the cresty mountain-brow,
 Now bending lowly, now
 Rearing high their plumage brave ;
 Where the saucy ruffin' breeze
 Pushes through the fretful trees
 All in tumult wild a-flying,
 And be-words their sigh, with sighing
 "Come, and see !
 Prithee, come, and see !"

Come, and see !
 Such is rural beauty ; such
 Pleasure, to be found for you ;
 If then, this tale be true,
 Couldst thou ever look too much ?
 Come, and see !—The hills, the woods,
 The valleys, and the rolling floods,
 "Come, and see !" are all a-saying,
 And be-word their pray'r, with praying
 "Come, and see !
 Prithee, come, and see !"

TO A STREAM

WHITHER ! tell me, Stream !
 Roll these idle rills,
 Down the rocks where Echo lies,
 From the bleeding hills :
 Kissing ev'ry heedless flow'r
 As it droops thy waters o'er,
 With a liquid lip of foam ?

" From the mountain urn
 O'er the heath I go,
 Where the wild linnet sings,
 To the woods below.
 O'er the meadow's golden dress,
 Rover of the wilderness !
 And the sleeping vales, I roam."

Wild and silly Stream !
 Ere the wish be vain,
 Turn to thy grassy spring,
 Murmur ! again.
 Tears, tears of sorrow deep
 Rovers o'er their follies weep,
 For a dear and distant home.

ON THE DEATH OF A RECLUSE

LOVE droop'd when Beauty fled the bow'r,
 And languid closed the day,
 Wept ev'ry little flow'r,
 And turn'd its head away.

The wind spoke with a fallen tongue,
 The green reed sigh'd amain,
 And sable forests swung
 Rude melody again.

Wild caves rang deep, and rocks grew cold,
 Whilst rivers wept by them,
 All nature's death-bells toll'd
 A requiem ! a requiem !

Mid roaring brooks and dark moss-vales
 Where speechless Thought abides,
 Still her sweet spirit dwells,
 That knew no world besides.

Her form the woodland still retains—
 Wound but a creeping flow'r,
 Her very life-blood stains
 Thee in a falling show'r.

Touch but the stream, drink but the air,
 Her cheek, her breath is known—
 Ravish that red rose there,
 And she is all thy own.

LOVERS' PIETY

THE sullen, silent hour of pray'r
 Sends many a wand'ring sigh to Heav'n,
 From breasts that earth-enthralled are,
 And aye to mortal angels giv'n.

With transient step, the murmurer roves
 From hill to vale, from bell to blossom,
 Then turns it to the Heav'n it loves—
 A woman's lip ! a woman's bosom !

THE ANSWER

Heav'n's flow'rs are red an' rare,
 Ev'ry sigh to heav'n-bed roamin'
 Cowereth too contently there,
 To think on sinfu' breast o' woman.

Woman's smile is chare enough,
 And her kiss is not ungratefu',
 But to sighs, so far aloof
 From sin, must sure be very hatefu'.

EPIGRAM ON A LADY

No longer shall Venus, as poets have told,
 With Pallas in enmity be,
 For later and better mythologists hold
 That both are united in THEE.

THE BEE

TO MRS. —

THE Bee is chidden, for that in his providence of the merely useful things of life, he hath neglected the pleasures thereof and its sweeter enjoyments. Whilst his brothers of the hive are abroad in the fields, engaged in the dearer office of collecting the treasures o' flowers, he, the Solitary, remaineth locked within his cell, employed in the toilsome and ungrateful duty of extruction. He is advised to quit that dull life, nor be so wholly studious as to neglect pleasure. Inducements are mentioned, and at the name of his favourite flower, the pale Sweet-pea, his bosom riseth, and he goeth forth singing and very loving. But he is rebuked in that this flower is in the possession of another, and exhorted rather to return to his former obscurity, than follow such unholy loves.

FROM th' intricate, though gainful,
Thy wax-wrought knavery,
From sweetless and from painful,
Come forth, thou drowsy Bee.

Long season thou'st been rearing
Thy scientific bowers,
And o'er the future peering,
Forgat the present flowers.

Come, rouse thee from thy slumbers,
And shake thy trumpet-wing,
In small sonorous numbers,
Thou tiny poet sing.

O'er od'rous bells and blossoms
See others how they hie,
And pillow'd by sweet bosoms,
They murmur as they lie.

The coronet fresh o' the fountain,
The lily i' the vale,
Queen daisy on her mountain,
And primrose prink-the-dale ;

The time's-scythe mocking myrtle,
The rose in blushes drest,
Like virgin without kirtle,
Laid in her lover's breast ;

FOUND FAITHLESS

Sweet-pea'n pale-pink—Thou minion !
 Ay, now thy breast's on fire,
 Thou spread'st thy flimsy pinion,
 And wak'st thy meadow lyre.

Thou fool ! will nought content thee
 Less than such flow'r divine ?
 Repent ye, ah ! repent ye,
 Whilst yet the pow'r is thine.

What though aspirant Zephyrs,
 On most Hyblæan wing,
 With rival breaths, sweet favours
 Into her bosom bring ;

Her beauteous head reclining
 Upon majestic stem,
 Ambitious pale, entwining
 Her floral diadem ;

Though odours amaranthine,
 Rapt from empyreal bow'rs,
 Her slender limbs might grant thine,
 The queen o' graceful flow'rs !

Yet see ! churl coyness gathers,
 Back to thy cell again !
 Her bosom is another's,
 Thy song is all in vain.

TO THE SAME

FOUND FAITHLESS

THOU think'st I'll weep, thou think'st I'll sigh,
 Thou think'st for thy false faith I'll die,
 No, no—I've broke the spell ;
 But thou shalt weep, and thou shalt sigh,
 And thou shalt live to wish to die,
 And die to live in Hell !

THE FAIRY-SESSION

ROUND the stem of a sleeping flower,
Whilst the voice of the night was still,
Sat a synod of wondrous power,
On the blades of a grassy hill.

There were fays of the river and fell,
There were elves of the wood and glen,
There were spirits of the grot and cell,
There were wraiths of the moor and fen.

The hymnal bands of the traceless tune,
Heard i' the bosom of the sky,
And the riders of the radiant lune,
On a down-beam, hither-borne, hie.

Some piped on tubes of invisible span,
Some wept o'er th' inaudible lyre,
And ever as the melody ran,
Rung the bells of the heav'nly quire.

And I heard down the valley bourne,
Like th' echo of a broken dream,
A chant; as a wind-shook reed might mourn,
Or the song of a running stream.

FAIRIES' ADDRESS TO THE MOON

Listen, O moonbeam, listen !
To hollow reeds we fill,
And rest on this green bosom,
The sweetest of the hill.

Rest, rest, O rest, mountain flowers are dreaming,
And the dale-queens wink, i' the glittering blaze,
In silver veils o'er the red-rose streaming,
And bow'ring the blue-bell in a bright shade of rays.

These weepers, these weepers of the roral tear !
How can they weep for the Sun,
When their green robes sweetest and brightest appear,
And have such a livery on ?

32 FAIRIES' ADDRESS TO THE MOON

The gorgeous fount is a ring of light,
The river is a flood of beams,
And the woods as they shiver in the winds of night
Seem cover'd with a thousand streams.

The rushes start like icicles
Bright from the shining lake,
And each fond reed its pleasure tells
In whispers through the brake.

Hail then, fair fount of effluent light ! Hail, hail !
Thou sun of night, thou glory of the sky !
White rose of Heaven ! sweet Queen o' the blue-bosom'd
vale,
Where grow the pale star-flowers, and the long-hair'd
meteors fly !

Fly away, Moon !
Spirits, begone !
For the east begins to flare.
To the wood ! to the glen !
To the moor ! to the fen !
To the grot ! to the river ! to the air !

NEPENTHE

A FRAGMENTARY SKETCH

NEPENTHE

CANTO I

OVER a bloomy land, untrod
By heavier foot than bird or bee
Lays on the grassy-bosomed sod,
I passed one day in reverie :
High on his unpavilioned throne
The heaven's hot tyrant sat alone,
And like the fabled king of old
Was turning all he touched to gold.
The glittering fountains seemed to pour
Steep downward rills of molten ore,
Glassily tinkling smooth between
Broom-shaded banks of golden green,
And o'er the yellow pasture straying
Dallying still yet undelaying,
In hasty trips from side to side
Footing adown their steepy slide
Headlong, impetuously playing
With the flowery border pied,
That edged the rocky mountain stair,
They pattered down incessant there,
To lowlands sweet and calm and wide.
With golden lip and glistening bell
Burned every bee-cup on the fell,
Whate'er its native unsunned hue,
Snow-white or crimson or cold blue ;
Even the black lustres of the sloe
Glanced as they sided to the glow ;
And furze in russet frock arrayed
With saffron knots, like shepherd maid,
Broadly tricked out her rough brocade.
The singed mosses curling here,
A golden fleece too short to shear !
Crumbled to sparkling dust beneath
My light step on that sunny heath.

Light ! for the ardour of the clime
 Made rare my spirit, that sublime
 Bore me as buoyant as young Time
 Over the green Earth's grassy prime,
 Ere his slouch'd wing caught up her slime ;
 And sprang I not from clay and crime,
 Had from those humming beds of thyme
 Lifted me near the starry chime
 To learn an empyrean rhyme.

No melody beneath the moon
 Sweeter than this deep runnel tune !
 Here on the greensward grown hot gray,
 Crisp as the unshorn desert hay,
 Where his moist pipe the dulcet rill
 For humorous grasshopper doth fill,
 That spits himself from blade to blade
 By long o'er-rest uneasy made ;
 Here, ere the stream by fountain pushes
 Lose himself brightly in the rushes
 With butterfly path among the bushes,
 I'll lay me, on these mosses brown,
 Murmuring beside his murmurs down,
 And from the liquid tale he tells
 Glean out some broken syllables,
 Or close mine eyes in dreamy swoon,
 As by hoarse-winding deep Gihoon
 Soothes with the hum his idle pain
 The melancholy Tartar swain,
 Sole mark on that huge-meadowed plain !

Hie on to great Ocean ! hie on ! hie on !
 Fleet as water can gallop, hie on !
 Hear ye not thro' the ground
 How the sea-trumpets sound
 Round the sea-monarch's shallop, hie on !

Hie on to brave Ocean ! hie on ! hie on !
 From the sleek mountain levels, hie on !
 Hear ye not in the boom
 Of the water-bell's womb
 Pleasant whoop to sea-revels, hie on !

Hie on to bright Ocean ! hie on ! hie on !
'Tis the store of rich waters, hie on !
Hear ye not the rough sands
Rolling gold on the strands
For poor Earth's sons and daughters, hie on !

Hie on to calm Ocean ! hie on ! hie on !
Summer-rest from earth riot, hie on !
Hear ye not the smooth tide
With deep murmur and wide
Call ye down to its quiet, hie on !

Thus to the babbling streamlet elves
To haste them down the slopes and shelves,
Methought some Naiad of their fall
In her bright dropping sparry hall
Sang to her glassy virginal.—

Perchance to me monition sweet !

I started upright to my feet
Attent : 'twas but a fancy dream !
I only heard in measure meet
The pulses of the fountain beat,
As onward prest the throbbing stream.
Fair fall no less my fancy dream !
I have been still led like a child
My heedless, wayward path and wild
Thro' this rough world by feebler clues,
So they were bright, than rainbow dew
Spun by the insect gossamer
To climb with thro' the ropy air.
Fair fall ye then, my fancy dream !
I'll with this labyrinthian stream,
Where'er it flow, where'er it cease,
There be my pathway and my peace !

Swift as a star falls thro' the night,
Swift as a sunshot dart of light,
Down from the hill's heaven-touching height
The streamlet vanished from my sight !

I crept me to a promontory
Where it had fallen from earth's top storey,

And peering over, saw its flow,
A cataract white of smoke and snow,
Looping in fleecy shawls below ;
Frail footing on such shrouds as these !
Elves may descend them if they please ;
But here, by help of bushy stem
That plumes the hill's huge diadem,
By hoar rock, its gigantic gem
Far glancing o'er the prostrate seas,
Into the vale that spreads to them
Lark-like I'll drop by glad degrees.

Shrill on those lofty-sloping leas
The wind-bells sounded in the breeze,
Dingling beside me, as I glid,
So sweet, I scarce knew what I did ;
But shrilly, too, as that lithe shell
Blown from old Ocean's world-broad well,
When the red hour of morn's begun
And Zephyr posts before the Sun.
Yet shriller still than rings at morn
The wet-mouthed wind-god's broadening horn,
Sudden above my head I heard
The cliff-scream of the thunder-bird,
The rushing of his forest wings,
A hurricane when he swoops or springs,
And saw upon the darkening glade
Cloud-broad his sun-eclipsing shade.

With the shrill clang that cleft the skies
When he flew Joveward with his prize,
The golden-haired Dardanian boy,
With such rude burst of robber joy,
Rose the sun-scorner ; from earth's shore
My boy-weight like a worm he bore
Methought to heaven's embowed floor ;
My brain turned—I could see no more !

O blest unfabled Incense Tree,
That burns in glorious Araby,
With red scent chalicing the air,
Till earth-life grow Elysian there !

Half buried to her flaming breast
In this bright tree, she makes her nest,
Hundred-sunned Phoenix ! when she must
Crumble at length to hoary dust !

Her gorgeous death-bed ! her rich pyre
Burnt up with aromatic fire !
Her urn, sight high from spoiler men !
Her birthplace when self-born again !

The mountainless green wilds among,
Here ends she her unechoing song !
With amber tears and odorous sighs
Mourned by the desert where she dies !

Laid like the young fawn mossily
In sun-green vales of Araby,
I woke hard by the Phoenix tree
That with shadeless boughs flamed over me ;
And upward called by a dumb cry
With moonbroad orbs of wonder, I
Beheld the immortal Bird on high
Glassing the great sun in her eye.
Stedfast she gazed upon his fire,
Still her destroyer and her sire !
As if to his her soul of flame
Had flown already, whence it came ;
Like those that sit and glare so still,
Intense with their death struggle, till
We touch, and curdle at their chill !—
But breathing yet while she doth burn,
The deathless Daughter of the sun !
Slowly to crimson embers turn
The beauties of the brightsome one.
O'er the broad nest her silver wings
Shook down their wasteful glitterings ;
Her brinded neck high-arched in air
Like a small rainbow faded there ;
But brighter glowed her plummy crown
Mouldering to golden ashes down ;
With fume of sweet woods, to the skies,
Pure as a Saint's adoring sighs,

Warm as a prayer in Paradise,
Her life-breath rose in sacrifice !
The while with shrill triumphant tone
Sounding aloud, aloft, alone,
Ceaseless her joyful deathwail she
Sang to departing Araby !

Deep melancholy wonder drew
Tears from my heartspring at that view ;
Like cresset shedding its last flare
Upon some wistful mariner,
The Bird, fast blending with the sky,
Turned on me her dead-gazing eye
Once—and as surge to shallow spray
Sank down to vapoury dust away !

O, fast her amber blood doth flow
From the heart-wounded Incense Tree,
Fast as earth's deep-embosomed woe
In silent rivulets to the sea !

Beauty may weep her fair first-born,
Perchance in as resplendent tears,
Such golden dewdrops bow the corn
When the stern sickleman appears.

But oh ! such perfume to a bower
Never allured sweet-seeking bee,
As to sip fast that nectarous shower
A thirstier minstrel drew in me !

My burning soul one drop did quaff—
Heaven reeled and gave a thunder-laugh !
Earth reeled, as if with pendulous swing
She rose each side thro' half her ring,
That I, head downward, twice uphurled,
Saw twice the deep blue underworld,
Twice, at one glance, beneath me lie
The bottomless, boundless, void sky !
Tho' inland far, me seemed around
Ocean came on with swallowing sound
Like moving mountains serried high !
Methought a thousand daystars burned
By their mere fury as they turned,

Bewildering heaven with too much light,
Till day looked like a daylight night.
Brief chaos, only of the brain !
Heaven settled on its poles again,
And all stood still, but dizzily.

Light-trooping o'er the distant lea
A band I saw, where Revelry
Seemed on her bacchant foot to be,
And heard the dry tambour afar
Before her Corybantian car
Booming the rout to winy war.
Forward I felt my spirit chime
Awhoop with this hot-raging rhyme,
That, breathed up by the feverish crew,
While back their Mænad locks they threw,
O'er them imbrown'd the welkin blue.

Ambition mad, when most sublime !
Fain had I clomb Heaven's empery.
Fain would my Titan spirit climb
Mountain-topt mountain arduously,
To whoop the far uproar to me !
Such insane power and subtilty
The magic drop ethereal gave,
Tireless I clomb that palmy tree
And saw broad-landed Earth how brave !
Low on the horizontal lee
I saw, bedreamed, far ocean dumb
Uppgathering his white skirts to come
Midland ; his arms twixt Araby
And Europe, Afric, India, spread
I saw ; the Mediterraneans three,
Azure, and orient grey, and red,
Washing at once the earth and sky ;
With the untravelled wastes that lie
Of greenest ocean, where the South
Swills it with Demogorgon drouth,
Disgorging amid foam and roar
His salt draught back to every shore.

Mute as I gaze my feet below,
By times the silvery ashes glow

Under me, where the Bird of Fire
In her own flames seemed to expire,
Chanting her odorous monody ;
Methought in each faint glow, again
I saw her last dim glance at me
Languid with hope akin to pain.

“ How, if the juice with ether rife,
Elixir of superfluous life,
Instinct with spiritual flame
Which from yon still of splendour came,
Might prove more quick restorative
Of her, than Hippocrat could give ? ”

So thought I, and with fancy fired
Did what the draught itself inspired :
I sprinkled on the embers white
Few drops ; they curdle—close—unite,
Each with his orb of atomies,
Till in firm corporation these
Leaguings again by law occult,
Shapening and shapening by degrees,
Develop fair the full result ;
And like the sun in giant mould,
Cast of unnumbered stars, behold
The Phoenix with her crest of gold,
Her silver wings, her starry eyes,
The Phoenix from her ashes rise !

Now was the wherefore easy scanned,
She bore me from my bloomy land,
Threw on me her last filmed look ;
Smouldering aidless in her nook
Years had departed ere she grew
By sun and starlight bird anew ;
But their full essence poured in flame,
Distilment sweet ! Nepenthe true !
(By nature panacée sure, and name !)
Poured on her dust-dismembered frame,
Phoenix at once to heaven she flew !

Over hills and uplands high
Hurry me, Nymphs ! O, hurry me !

Where green Earth from azure sky
Seems but one blue step to be ;
Where the sun his wheel of gold
Burnishes deeply in her mould,
And her shining walks uneven
Seem declivities of Heaven.
Come ! where high Olympus nods,
Groundsill to the hall of Gods !
Let us thro' the breathless air
Soar insuperable, where
Audibly in mystic ring
The angel orbs are heard to sing ;
And from that bright vantage ground
Viewing nether heaven profound,
Mark the eagle near the sun
Scorching to gold his pinions dun ;
With fleecy birds of paradise
Upfloating to their native skies ;
Or hear the wild swans far below
Faintly whistle as they row
Their course on the transparent tide
That fills the hollow welkin wide !

Hurry me, Nymphs ! O, hurry me
Far above the grovelling sea,
Which, with blind weakness and base roar
Casting his white age on the shore,
Wallows along that slimy floor ;
With his widespread webbed hands
Seeking to climb the level sands,
But rejected still to rave
Alive in his uncovered grave.

Light-skirt dancers, blithe and boon
With high hosen and low shoon,
'Twixt sandal bordure and kirtle rim
Showing one pure wave of limb,
And frequent to the cestus fine
Lavish beauty's undulous line,
Till like roses veiled in snow
Neath the gauze your blushes glow ;
Nymphs, with tresses which the wind
Sleekly tosses to its mind,

More deliriously dishevelled
Than when the Naxian widow revelled
With her flush bridegroom on the ooze,
Hurry me, Sisters ! where ye choose,
Up the meadowy mountains wild,
Aye by the broad sun oversmiled,
Up the rocky paths of gray
Shaded all my hawthorn way,
Past the very turban crown
Feathered with pine and aspen spray,
Darkening like a soldan's down
O'er the mute stoopers to his sway,
Meek willows, daisies, brambles brown,
Grasses and reeds in green array,
Sighing what he in storm doth say—
Hurry me, hurry me, Nymphs, away !

Here on the mountain's sunburnt side
Trip we round our steepy slide,
With tinsel moss, dry-woven pall,
Minist'ring many a frolic fall ;
Now, sweet Nymphs, with ankle trim
Foot we around this fountain brim,
Where even the delicate lilies show
Transgressing bosoms in bright row
(More lustrous-sweet than yours, I trow !)
Above their deep green boddices.
Shall you be charier still than these ?
Garments are only good to inspire
Warmer, wantoner desire ;
For those beauties make more riot
In our hearts, themselves at quiet
Under veils and vapoury lawns
Thro' which their moon-cold lustre dawns,
And might perchance if full revealed
Seem less wondrous than concealed,
Greater defeat of Virtue made
When Love shoots from an ambuscade,
Than with naked front and fair.
Who the loose Grace in flowing hair
Hath ever sought with so much care,
As the crape-enshrouded nun
Scarce warmed by touches of the sun ?

Nathless, whatsoe'er your tire,
Hurry me, sweet Nymphs, higher, higher !
Till the broad seas shrink to streams,
Or, beneath my lofty eye,
Ocean a broken mirror seems,
Whose fragments 'tween the lands do lie,
Glancing me from its hollow sky,
Till my cheated vision deems
My place in heaven twice as high !

Ho ! Evoe ! I have found
True Nepenthe ! balm of pain !
Sought by the sagest wits profound,
Mystic Panacée ! in vain.
Virtuous Elixir, this
Sure the supreme sense of bliss !
Feeling my impetuous soul
Ravish me swifter than Earth's roll
Tow'rds bright day's Eoan goal ;
Or if West I chose to run,
Would sweep me thither before the sun,
Raising me on ethereal wing
Lighter than the lark can spring
When drunk with dewlight which the Morn
Pours from her translucent horn
To steep his sweet throat in the corn.
Still, O still my step sublime
Footless air would higher climb,
Like the Chaldee Hunter bold,
Builder of towery Babel old !
O what sweeter, finer pleasure
Than this wild, unruly measure,
Reeling hither, thither, so
Higher to the heavens we go !
Nymph and Swain, with rosy hand,
Wreathed together in a band,
Like embracing vines that loop
Browner elms with tendril hoop,
Let us, liker still to these
In rich autumn's purple weather,
Mix, as the vineyard in the breeze,
Our wine-dropping brows together !

Swinging on our feet around
Till our tresses touch the ground,
That mad moment we do stay
To meditate our whirl-away !
Winds that, blown off the honied heath,
Warm the deep reeds with mellowing breath,
Shall for us, Æolian still,
Those green flutes of Nature fill ;
On bluebell beds like dulcimers
Tingle us most fantastic airs ;
And where'er her numerous strings
Woodbine like a wind-harp swings,
Play us light fugues with nimble wings,
Trumpeting thro' each twisted shell
Till its mossy wrinkles swell.
Such shall, with sweet voluntaries,
Blithe accompaniment bear us,
Not without help of that dim band,
Minstrels of each woody land,
Piping unhired on every hand ;
These shall be our volatile chorus,
Fleeting the wilderness before us,
Like their small brethren of the chant,
Drone-winders itinerant
Old-world humming-birds, the bees,
Our sweet whiffers shall be these !
While our oval close within
Capering faun keeps mellow din,
With pipe and ceaseless cittern thrum,
Tinkling tabor's shallow drum,
Cymbal and lengthening cornmuse hum.
Uproar sweet ! as when he crost,
Omnipotent Bacchus, with his host,
To farthest Ind ; and for his van
Satyrs and other sons of Pan,
With swoln eye-burying cheeks of tan,
Who trolled him round which way he ran
His spotted yoke through Hindustan,
And with most victorious scorn
The mild foes of wine to warn,
Blew his dithyrambic horn !
That each river to his source
Trembled—and sunk beneath his course,

Where, 'tis said of many, they
Mourn undiscovered to this day.

Still my thoughts, mine eyes aspire !
Hurry me, sweet Nymphs, higher and higher !
Smooth green hills my soul do tire ;
Let us leave this lowly shire,
Tho' it be the Happy Clime,
'Tis for spirits less sublime !
Fleet we sheer as lightning-blast
Pinnacled Petrea past,
Burning rocks bestrown with sands !
O'er the bleak Deserta lands
Pass we, as o'er dead Nature's tomb,
Where Sirocco and Simoom
Battle with hot breath for room,
Tho' not even a flower or cress
Make war-worth that wilderness ;
From this wavering blown arene
To where the Rome-repelling queen,
High-stomach'd, star-bound Emperess !
Long beruled broad Palmyrene,
Let's begone ; and farther still,
Here, too, naught but sandblown hill,
Only another ocean bed
Tossed by billowy winds instead
Of the old legitimate breakers,
Dust-disturbers, not earth-shakers !
From these deep abysses dry,
Filled with sunlight to the sky,
Let us, O let us swift begone
To the cedared Lebanon ;
Over Carmel's flowery sides
Where the wild-bee ever bides,
Round each beauty of the glade
Singing his noontide serenade,
Till the ear-encharmed fair,
Opening her leafy stomacher,
Lets in the little ravisher.
On to shadowy Taurus, on !
Looming o'er the Syrian wave,
Scarce a flower his sides upon,
Swoln with many an antique grave

Of slaughtered Persepolitan,
Rare Greek and Macedonian.
Lowly shelter for the slain
Still his rueful heaths remain,
That purpler tinged with buried blood
Darken deeper the green flood,
And, a blushing chronicle,
The tale of fallen glory tell,
Persia's dumb echoes know so well !

Thou whose thrilling hand in mine
Makes it tremble as unbid,
Whose dove-drooping eyes divine
Curtain Love beneath their lid !
Fairest Anthea ! thou whose grace
Leads me enchantedly along
Till the sweet windings that we trace
Seem like the image of a song !
Blithest Anthea ! thou I ween
Of this jocund choir the queen,
From thy beauty still more rare,
And a more earth-spurning air,
If forsooth my reeling vision
Hold thee steadily, and this
Be not my mind's insane misprision,
Drunk with the essence-drop of bliss !
Small matter !—while the dream be bright !
Surely thou with form so light
Must be some creature born for winging
Where the chimes of Heaven are ringing,
And sweet cherub faces singing
Requiems to ascending souls
Where each orb of glory rolls !
Bind me, oh bind me next thy heart,
So shall we to the skies depart,
And like a twin-star fixt in ether,
Burn with immortal flame together !

That be our emprised rest,
Eyre where birds of Eden nest,
Warbling hymns in Wonder's ear !
We still walk this lowly sphere,

Lost in the heaven's crystalline mere
More than in ocean one small tear.
Wherefore, without vain delay,
Haste, Anthea ! haste away
To those highest peaks the sun
Steps with glittering sandal on,
That this bosom-fire as fast
As his, breathe forth in the clear vast !

Bright-haired Spirit ! Golden Brow !
Onward to far Ida now !
Leaving these garden lands below
In sea-born dews to steep their glow :
Caria and Lycia, dulcet climes !
Beds of flowers whose odour limes
The o'erflying fast far bird, their thrall
Hovering entranced till he fall ;
Broad Mæonia's streamy vales
Winding beneath us, white with swans
Borne by their downy-swellings sails ;
Each her lucid beauty scans,
Bending her slow beak round, and sees
Her grandeur as she floats along
Gracefully ruffled by the breeze,
And troats for joy, too proud for song.
Leave we the downlands, tho' be there
Joy a lifelong sojourner ;
There for ever wildwood numbers
Poured in Doric strains dilute
Thro' the unlaborious flute
Soothe Disquiet to his slumbers ;
In his rosebed sleeps the bee,
Lulled by Lydian melody,
Half the honied morn in vain !
Idler still than Doric swain,
Steeped in double sweetness he
Hums, as he dreams, his wildwood strain.
The Mysian vineplucker sings i' the tree,
And Ionia's echoing train
Of reapers, bending down the lea,
Make rich the winds with minstrelsy.

Here, no less, if any linger,
Pointing us down with abject finger,

Or stop with but a sigh to praise
The slothful fields on which we gaze
More time than serves him to renew
His buoyant draughts of ether blue,
Or (if the wine-sweat pouring through
With beaded reek his brows embrue)
Shake from his curls the shining dew—
Down with the grovelling caitiff, down !
Scourge him with your green thyrses down !
While as a thundercloud on high
Bursting its blackness o'er him, I
Envelop him in my blazing scorn
Of dread pride and bright anger born !
Here is meet repose for none
That climb Earth's mountain-studded zone !
Here the Great Mother smoothes again
Her broad skirts to the broader main !
Even Æolia's lofty steep
Shelves to the tributary deep,
And her level winds do play
His watery organ far away
To the hoarse Thermaic strand ;
Sleek as the tremulous lady moon
From her bright horizon chair,
Tipping his silver keys in tune
With long low arm and beamy hand
She stretches all enjewelled there.
Ida ! —illoo ! behold ! behold
Ida, the Queen of the Hills of old,
Rising with sundropt crown of gold !
Alone great Ida from the shore
Lifts high above its silent roar
Her caverns, and with those rude ears
Only the haughty thunder hears !
All hail, green-mantled Ida !
Floodgate of heaven-fall'n streams !
Replenisher of wasteful ocean's store !
Sweetener of his salt effluence ! Ever-pure !
Battener of meagre Earth ! Bestower
Of their moist breath to vegetable things
That suck their life from thee !—
All hail !—
All hail, green Ida !—

Woody-belted Ida !—
Nurse of the bounding lion ! his green lair,
Whence he doth shake afar
The shepherdry with his roar ! All hail,
Peaks where the wild ass flings
His Pegasean heels against mankind,
And the more riotous mares
Pawing at heaven, snuff the womb-swelling wind !
Ida, all hail ! all hail !
Nature's green, ever-during pyramid
Heaped o'er the behemoth brute-royal bones
Of monstrous Anakim !
All hail, great Ida ! throne
Of that old Jove the olden poet sung
Where, from the Gods alone,
He listened to the moan
Of his divine Sarpedon, thousand moans among !—
Ida, all hail ! all hail !
Thus on thy pinnacle,
With springy foot like the wild swan that soars
Off to invisible shores,
I stand ! with blind Ambition's waxen wings
High o'er my head
Outspread
Plucking me off the Earth to wheel aërial rings !
Lo ! as my vision glides
Adown these perilous flowery sides,
Green hanging-gardens only trod
By Nymph or Sylvan god,
And sees o'er what a gulf their eminent glory swells,
I tremble with delight,
Proud of my terrible plight,
And turn me to the hollow caves
Where the hoarse spirit of the Euxine raves,
The melancholy tale of that drown'd Youth he tells
To the fast fleeting waves,
For ever in vast murmurs, as he laves
With foam his sedgy locks loose-floating down the Dardanelles !

Down the Dardanelles !
What Echo in musical sound repels
My words, like thunder tolled

From the high-toppling rocks
In loud redoublous shocks
Behold, great Sun, behold !

Down the Dardanelles !
Behold the Thunderer where she rides !
Behold her how she swells
Like floating clouds her canvas sides !
Raising with ponderous breast the tides
On both the shores, as down she strides,
Down the Dardanelles !

Down the Dardanelles !
Each Continent like a caitiff stands,
As every broadside knells !
While with a voice that shakes the strands
She spreads her hundred-mouth'd commands,
Albion's loud law to both the lands,
Down the Dardanelles !

Down the Dardanelles !
Ye billowy hills before her bowne !
Wind Caverns ! your deep shells
Ring Ocean and Earth her old Renown,
Long as that sun from Ida's crown
Smoothes her broad road with splendour down,
Down the Dardanelles !

Anthea, ever dear !
I feel, I feel the sharp satyric ear
Thy draught Circean gave me, echoing clear
With that far chime !
Capacious grown enough to hear
The music of the lower sphere,
Tho' fainter than the passing tread of stealthy-footed Time !

Be mute, ye summer airs around !
Let not a sigh disturb the sound
That like a shadow climbs the steepy ground
Up from blue Helle's dim profound !
Listen ! the roar
Creeps on the ear as on a little shore,
And by degrees
Swells like the rushing sound of many seas,
And now as loud upon the brain doth beat
As Helle's tide in thunderbursts broke foaming at my feet !

Hist ! ho !—the Spirit sings
While in the cradle of the surge he swings,
Or falling down its sheeted laps,
Speaks to it in thunder-claps
Terrifical, half-suffocated things !
For ever with his furious breath
Keeping a watery storm beneath
Where'er he sinks, that o'er him see the
The frothy salt-sea surfaces
Dissolving with an icy hiss,
As if the marvellous flood did flow
Over a quenchless fire below !
Hist ! ho ! the Spirit sings !

In the caves of the deep—lost Youth ! lost Youth !—
O'er and o'er, fleeting billows ! fleeting billows !—
Rung to his restless everlasting sleep
By the heavy death-bells of the deep,
Under the slimy-dropping sea-green willows,
 Poor Youth ! lost Youth !
 Laying his dolorous head, forsooth,
 On Carian reefs uncouth—
 Poor Youth !
On the wild sand's ever-shifting pillows !

In the foam's cold shroud—lost Youth ! lost Youth !—
And the lithe waterweed swathing round him !—
Mocked by the surges roaring o'er him loud,
“ Will the sun-seeker freeze in his shroud,
Aye, where the deep-wheeling eddy has wound him ? ”
 Lost Youth ! poor Youth !
 Vail him his Dædalian wings, in truth ?
 Stretched there without all ruth—
 Poor Youth !—
Weeping fresh torrents into those that drowned him !

List no more the ominous din,
Let us plunge deep Helle in !
Thracia hollos !—what to us
Sky-dejected Icarus ?
Shall we less than those wild kine
That swam this shallow salt confine,

Venture to show how mere a span
 Keeps continental man from man?
 Welcome, gray Europe, native clime
 Of clouds, and cliffs yet more sublime !
 Gray Europe, on whose Alpine head
 The Northwind makes his snowy bed,
 And fostered in that savage form
 Lies down a blast and wakes a storm !
 Up ! up ! to shrouded Rhodope
 That seems in the white waste to be
 An ice-rock in a foaming sea !

This inward rage, this eating flame,
 Turns into fiery dust my frame ;
 Thro' my red nostril and my teeth
 In sulphury fumes I seem to breathe
 My dragon soul, and fain would quench
 This drouth in some o'erwhelming drench !
 Up ! to the frostbound waterfalls,
 That hang in waves the mountain walls !
 Down tumbling ever and anon
 With long-pent thunders loosed in one,
 Thro' the deep valleys where of yore
 The Deluge his wide channels wore.
 Hark ! thro' each green and gateless door,
 Valley to echoing valley calls
 Me, steep up, higher to the sun !
 Hark ! while we stand in mute astound,
 Cloud-battled high Pangæus hoar
 With earthquake voice and ocean roar
 Keeps the pale region trembling round !
 Upward ! each loftier height we gain,
 I spurn it like the basest plain
 Trod by the fallen in hell's profound !
 Illoo, great Hæmus ! Hæmus old,
 Half earth into his girdle rolled,
 Swells against heaven !—Up ! up ! the stars
 Wheel near his goal their glittering cars ;
 Ambition's mounting-step sublime
 To vault beyond the sphere of Time
 Into Eternity's bright clime !
 Where this fierce joy
 I feel shall aye subside,

Like a swollen bubble on the ocean tide,
Into the River of Bliss, Elysium-wide ;
And all annoy
Lie drowned with it for ever there,
And never-ebbing Life's soft stream with confluent wave
My floating Spirit bear
Among those calm Beatitudes and fair,
That lave
Their angel forms, with pure luxuriance free,
In thy rich ooze and amber-molten sea,
Slow-flooding to the one deep choral stave—
Eterne Tranquillity !
All-blessing, blest, eterne Tranquillity !

Strymon ! heaven-descended stream !
Valley along, thy silver sand
Broader and broader yet doth gleam,
Spreading into ocean's strand,
Over whose white verge the storm
With his wide-swaying loomy arm
Weaves his mournful tapestry,
Slowly let down from sky to sea.
Strymon ! up thy craggy banks
'Mid the pinewood's wavering ranks,
What terrible howl ascends ? What blaze
Of torches blackening the coil'd haze
With grim contrast of smoky rays ?
What hideous features 'mid the flare,
Lit with yellow laughter ? Where,
Ah ! where my boon Circean band
Quiring round me hand in hand ?—
Furies, avault ! that dismal joy
Breeds me horrible annoy !
Avaunt, she-wolves ! with rabid yell
Riving the very seams of hell
To swallow me and your rout as well !
Flee, flee, my wretched soul, from these
Erinnys and Eumenides,
Bacchants no more, but raging brood
Of fiends to feast them on hot blood !—
Down ! down ! and shelter me in the flood !

“Hollo after !—to living shreds tear him !—hollo after !
To the ravenous wild winds share him !—hollo after !

Our rite he spurns,
 From our love he turns,
 Hurl him the glassy crags down ! hollo after !
 With your torches blast him,
 To the broken waves cast him,
 Head and trunk far asunder !
 With a bellow like thunder,
 Hollo after ! hollo after ! hollo after ! ”

Dull in the Drowner's ear
 Bubbled amid far ocean these sad echoes drear.

In the caves of the deep—Hollo ! hollo !—
 Lost Youth !—o'er and o'er fleeting billows !
 Hollo ! hollo !—without all ruth !—
 In the foam's cold shroud !—Hollo ! hollo !
 To his everlasting sleep !—Lost Youth !

CANTO II

ANTIQUITY, thou Titan-born !
 That rear'st thee, in stupendous scorn
 At all succession from thy bed
 On prime earth's firm foundations spread,
 And look'st with dim but settled eye
 O'er thy deep lap, within whose span
 Layer upon layer sepulchred lie
 Whole generations of frail man !
 That steady glare not fierce Simoom,
 Blasting with his hot pinion blinds,
 Nor floods of dust thy corse entomb,
 Heaped o'er thee by the sexton winds !
 Nor temple, tower, nor ponderous town
 Built on thy grave can keep thee down,
 But still thou rear'st thee in thy scorn,
 Antiquity, thou Titan-born,
 To crush our souls with that dim frown !
 Strong Son of Chaos ! who didst seem
 Only a fairer form of him,
 Moulding his mountainous profounds
 To fanes and monumental grounds ;
 His rocky coigns, with giant ease,
 In pyramids and palaces

Piling aslope, as we with pain
His ruinous rubbish raised in vain !
Thou that with Tubal old compeer
In living cliffs didst statue man
And carve, for toys, leviathan
Or mammoth, yet found bedded here
His stony limbs, where once he stood
Scarce moved a footpace by the Flood !
Still at thy works in mute amaze,
Sorrow and envy and awe we gaze,
Enlarge our little eyeballs still
To grasp in these degenerate days
Marvels that shewed a mighty will,
Huge power and hundred-handed skill,
That seek prostration and not praise
Too faint such lofty ears to fill !
From Ind to Egypt thou art one,
Pyramidal Memphis to Tanjore,
From Ipsambul to Babylon
Reddening the waste suburban o'er ;
From sand-locked Thebes to old Ellore.
Her caverned roof on columns high
Pitched, like a Giant brood that bore
Headstrong the mountain to the sky :
That one same Power, enorm, sublime
Thou art, from antique clime to clime,
Eternal stumbling-block of Time !
Whose fragmentary limbs do stay,
Stones of offence, his difficult way,
And turn it o'er our works of clay.
Lo ! where thy strength colossal lay
Dormant, within the deep-sunk halls
Of cities labyrinthian
'Mid sandy Afric and the walls
Of sunburnt Syria or Deccan,
Up from the bilging globe he calls
Seas to surprise thee, or enthralls
Earth to deluginous ocean,
So far he may ; with foamy van
Whelming her shores where thou bedreamed
Heard'st not the tide that o'er thee teemed
Mountains of water ! Ay in vain !
O'sailing vessels see below

Clear thro' the glass-green undulous plain,
Like emerald cliffs unmoved glow
Thy towering forms stretched far a-main
By Coromandel, or that side
Neptunian Ganges rolls the tide
Of his swoln sire : by Moab's lake
Whose purulent flood dry land doth slake
With bittern ooze, where that salt Wife
Drinks her own tears she weeps as rife,
Empillared there, as when she turned
Back tow'rds her liquorish late-spent life
Where Shame's sulphureous cities burned :
By Dorian Sicily and Misene,
Upon whose strand thou oft didst lean
Thy temple-crowned head ; and where
Antium with opposite Carthage were ;
By green Juvernia's giant road
Paved from her headlong slope and broad
Sands down to Rachlin's columned isle,
And dim Finn Gael's huge antred pile
Where his vast orgue, high fluted, stands
Basaltic, swept with billowy hands
Oft, till the mystic chancel mourn
To weltering biers around it borne
Hoarse ritual o'er the wrecked forlorn ;
There did the scythed Demon hew
Sheer the Cyclopien causeway thro',
Letting the steep Icelandic sea
In on the Ibernian and on Thee !
So from their icy moorings he,
Lopt cable, loosed the Arctic isles
Full sail, with mountainous weigh and prone
To force that boom of seadriven piles,
Bulwark against the Northern bore
Of Ocean laid by thee, and now
Chaining the Strait, as long before,
Tho' scattered on the Southern bow
Kamschatka's sparry waters o'er—
What need for thy great relics plough
Tartarian sands, or seek that scroll
Which the rapt Bonze can scarce unroll,
Thy chronicle, in pagodas dim,
Lengthening it wave and wave a-flow

Incessant, as from darkness' brim
Wells forth Cathaian Hoan-ho?
What need thy famous works be told
I' the New World, older than the Old,
If sooth the Mexique annals say,
With Eve's first born Tradition gray,
And monuments more fixed than they—
Pyramids baked in Noah's sun,
Dials and monstrous Gods, far back
Out-dating Denderah's Zodiac,
Crocodilopolis and Karnak ;
With scrolls of pictured speech begun
Ere smoother hieroglyph could run,
Slight copy of that primeval one?
What need the wondrous town untomb,
Palenque, aye too old for Fame
To tell her antediluvian name
Or fate ; perchance, at her own doom,
Crept back into Creation's womb,
Tired of endurance, thro' the chasm
Oped in Earth's side with mighty spasm
When Orinook burst forth, and down
From Chimborazo's streamy crown
Rolled oceanic Maranon,
Contributing fresh seas to seas ;
Huge chasm ! with Andes' ponderous chain
Locked to Eternity again,
The gulf of All as well as these.
Passing thy pierless bridges swung
Gorge over, darkening every dell,
With keystone rocks colossal hung
Like Sin's broad way from heaven to hell,
That thou to striding eyes must seem
Truly sole Pontifex supreme ;
Leaving among those untrod lands
That glistening marvel of thy hands,
Famed El Dorado, diamond walled
And paved, and golden tiled and halled,
Doubling with other torrid light
The furious summer of that zone,
And like the sun himself too bright
For mortal eyes to gaze upon ;
Turned from my vast digression o'er

Earth's wandering list, from Afric's shore,
Where'er thy landmarks globe around
Gigantic stepping-stones I found,
Off them to bear my Spirit bound
Far on, with rainbow leap sublime
Vaulting at once from clime to clime,
O'er starry peaks and floods profound
Vanishing on as swift as sound !
Goalward at length untired I flee
Past the still Verdurous Isles, that be
Oases of the herbless sea,
And those Happy Gardens placed
Edenlike in an azure waste,
Befanned with sunniest winds, the air
Swims visible in bright halo there,
Feeding with such rich juice the mould
That every fruit-tree drops with gold,
In tawny Harvest's pendant ear
Glitters the gold grain twice a year,
Each rivulet doth his bed emboss
With the crisp ore and yellowing dross,
His margin trim with asphodel
Gorgeously frounc'd ; and spreads as well
Woodland wide-over this rich flower,
Till each fair Isle thro' dale and fell
Seems to inlap a golden shower
Heaven-loved ; and where the breezes run
Her wavy grasses full of sun
Flow like a bright flood all in one.
Ah me ! how long my soul beguiles
The Siren of those Fortunate Isles !
Now, now right on my course I steer,
Fast, by the seagates of Tangier
Where crag-construct on either strand,
Huge outwork of thy offspring's hand,
Calpe and shelving Abyla stand,
Herculean pillars crumbled down
To hills, yet stedfast their renown ;
Still their old mightiness survives
Even in that one worn pedestal
Which spread the sea with Spanish liyes
Scattered like weeds beneath the wall,
Unshaken while their pride did fall,

And widowing half a race of wives,
Yet holds the prostrate realm in thrall!—
Rock of thy fame, and Albion's too !
Pitched on whose cope Islâm did call
With shrieking fife and shrill halloo
Afric, seen at one underview,
From Fez to Babelmandeb, all
Miramolin Afric, till he blew
His glorious breath loud blazoning thro'
The land of scimitar and shawl.
Like him from this haught terrace, I
Can Egypt's hollow realm descry
Whence my extravagant wing did bend,
Where at one swoop my soar shall end,
Blind falcon ! towering to the sun
Ever, till thou entreat me down,
With magical voice, Antiquity !
More proud thy bird than Jove's to be,
Creature sublime, beside thy knee
Perched, and for aye in life's disdain,
'Mid the great stillnesses, thy reign,
Sitting with Solitude and thee.

As from the moist and gelid sleep
Of Death we rise on shuddering bones,
The waste of that long night to weep,
We pined us down to skeletons ;
So shuddering, weeping, weltering, worn,
Gleaming with spectral eyes forlorn,
Upon my bleak estate and bare
Greyly I rose ; like wan Despair
Slow roused from Dissolution's lair.
But in what dread dominion ? Air
Hung like a hell-blue vapour there,
Steaming from some thick ooze, that cold
Over my foot like reptiles rolled
Sluggish, with many a slimy fold ;
Lethe's foul self, perchance, or flood
Made slab with gouts of gall and blood
Wept by the woe that wades the mud,
Cocytus, bubbling with drowned sighs.
But lo ! what shadowy forms arise,
Far off, to these ferruginous skies ?

Mountains, as sharp as squally clouds
When fell winds whistle in the shrouds,
Upcall to Fury, above, before,
My vision by this ominous shore,
Where each a burning pyramid seems,
O'erflown with liquorous fire, that teems
Down the slope edges in four streams.
Most sure the abysmal fen I tread
Shelves to the River of the Dead
That bears unto the eternal sea
Millions of ghastly things like me.
Hark ! from slow-floating bier and bier
Murmurs and rueful sobs I hear,
The while from these sepulchring hills
A yewtree wind the valley fills
That whispers with fast-fleeting breath,
"This is the dolorous Valley of Death !
Valley of Dolour—and of Death !"

Oh sorrow of Sinfulness ! the gate
To Pain, kept by watchful Hate !
Sloping aloft with cliffy sides,
Thro' the burnt air the porchway rides ;
Demonic shapes, devices grim,
Trenching the storied panels dim,
And mystic signs, dark oracles
Of Destiny, and Hell's decrees !
Alas ! what scalding sand-wind rolls
Me to the sulphury rack of souls
Fierce on, and scarfs my victim eyes
With careless wreaths for sacrifice ?
Thus weep I, whirlwind-rapt amain :
Save me ! O save, ye mighty Twain,
Arbiters here twixt Sin and Pain !
Tho' Angels still of Judgment, be
Angels of Mercy now to me !
Bend down your level looks, or raise
One iron finger from the knee,
So Cherubin Pities sing your praise !
Thus to a Twain that reared their forms
Like promontories o'er the storms,
Methought, dread Umpires of my doom,
Sitting impalled within the gloom

As ebon Seraphim by Night's throne,
Low at their feet I made my moan.
They stirred not at my prayer ; but dumb,
Sate like the symbols of the world to come
Immutable, inscrutable !

I lay

Drowned in my heart-blood, wept away
Fruitlessly at those feet, long time
Like the dust-clung, outcast corpse of Crime.

A sigh that seemed to come from heaven
By some ærial Sorrow given,
Weeping his sublunar state—a sigh—
One faint far sound, like a swan's cry
Heard thro' the daffodils ere it die,
O'ercame my senses ; a sweet wail
Soothing me with its violet gale
To gentlest mood. I looked—and lo !
Sweet as Love's star a crest did glow
On that now visible head I deemed
One of my Arbiter's. Fair it beamed
With soft dilation, mellowing still
The heav'n-fall'n gem its saffron fire,
Crowning the radiant front until
Godlike and glorified entire :
The while, as there essayed his skill
Light-handed Zephyr o'er a lyre
With the bright hair strung like golden wire,
Dulcetly did the sunbeams thrill
Within that coronal attire,
Hailing the dawn ! And at such hail
Behold a-peak the Orient dale,
Morning, with light-blown silver veil,
Stands dewy-eyed, and matron-pale ;
Breathing in smiles and tears upon
This sacred head her blessings dear,
As erst she did, each daylight peer,
Sad for her monumental Son.
O unchanged world ! 'Twas Memnon here
Sat gazing with a mournful cheer
Still at his mother ! Still with smile
Fond as her own would fain beguile

Her sorrow ! Still each matin rise
 Welcomed her bright tears with his sighs !
 Most strange ! most true ! for I anon
 Heard the famed chant heard long ago
 By storiers sage ascend the skies
 From his Æolian barbiton ;
 Soft parleying like the voice of rills
 With Echo in the distant hills,
 But versing words more liquid clear
 Than those could, to a thirstier ear.

Thus, with a breezy rise and fall, rang the Memnonian rhyme,
 Like the sweet-mouthed bells of heaven, wild but in one
 same chime.

Winds of the West, arise !
 Hesperian balmiest airs, O waft back those sweet sighs
 To her that breathes them from her own pure skies,
 Dew-dropping, mixt with dawn's engoldened dyes,
 O'er my unhappy eyes !
 From primrose bed and willow bank, where your moss
 cradle lies,
 O from your rushy bowers, to waft back her sweet sighs,
 Winds of the West, arise !

Over the ocean blown,
 Far-winnowing, let my soul be mingled with her own,
 By sighs responsive to each other known !
 Bird unto bird's loved breast has often flown
 From distant zone to zone ;
 Why must the Darling of the Morn lament him here alone ?
 Shall not his fleeting spirit be mingled with her own,
 Over the ocean blown ?

From your aerial bourne
 Look down, O Mother, and hear your hapless Memnon
 mourn !
 Spectre of my gone self, by sorrow worn,
 Leave me not, Mother beloved ! from your embraces torn,
 For ever here forlorn !
 For ever, ever lonely here ! of all life's glory shorn !
 Look down, O Mother ! behold your hapless Memnon
 mourn,
 From your aerial bourne !

The sweet Voice swooned, deep thrilling ; then
Raised its wild monody once more,
As the far murmuring of the main
Heard in a sea-shell's fairy shore,
Scarce sensible, made one with pain,
Wind-lost and fitfuller than before ;
Yet still methought the mystic strain
Burden like this bewildered bore.

O could my Spirit wing
Hills over, where salt Ocean hath his fresh headspring
And snowy curls bedeck the blue-haired King,
Up where sweet oral birds articulate sing
Within the desert ring—
Their mighty shadows o'er broad Earth the Lunar
Mountains fling,
Where the Sun's chariot bathes in Ocean's fresh head-
spring—
O could my Spirit wing !

O could this Spirit, prisoned here
Like thine, Immortal Murmurer !
In hatefullest bounds and bonds of clay,
O could this Spirit of mine away
To those strange lands—"Away ! away !"
Methought the breeze with soft command
Raised itself in a sigh to say
After me, whispering still "Away !"
Still by my side re-echoing bland
In fervorous secrecy—"Away !"
The desert breeze with pinion gray
Rustled along the leafless sand,
Warning me still—"Away ! away !"

Not less than magic breath had blown
Ashy ambition now to flame,
Within me ; but like veins in stone
Red grew the blood in my cold frame :
Tho' drained this life-spring to the lees
On lancing rocks—this body worn,
Weed-wrung, and saturate with seas
Gulped thro'—by their wild mercy borne
Half jellied hither, and well-nigh
Piecemeal by those white coursers tor-

That shook their manes of me, foam high,
 Cast on their saviour backs forlorn—
 Tho' thus my flesh, my spirit still
 Is unsubdued ! aspiring will
 Buoy up my sinking power. 'Tis thine,
 This quenchless spark ! To thee this glow,
 This rise from my sea-grave I owe,
 Nepenthe ! vital fire divine !
 Yet ah ! what boots if cup of bliss
 Have such a bitter dreg as this ?
 Fragile and faint must I still on
 The arduous path that I have gone,
 Or burn in my own sighs ! Like thee,
 A winged cap, O Mercury !
 I wear, that lifts me still to heaven,
 Tho' down to herd with mortals driven.

Now as swift as Sadness may
 Let me to those hills away,
 Where the shadows of the Moon
 Reach broad Earth at brightest noon,
 Where the Sun's car glittering
 Waits at Ocean's fresh head-spring,
 And sweet oral birds do sing
 Wild catches in the desert ring,
 Mocking the changeful-crested King !
 That must be where Cybele rears
 Her tow'ed head above the spheres,
 Awful to Gods ! where Eden high,
 With terraced stairs that climb the sky,
 Long lost to mortal ken doth lie.
 E'en let me thither sad and slow
 As wayworn he from thence doth go,
 Reptilous Nile !—As shades that pass
 Silent and soft o'er fields of grass,
 So let my trackless spectre glide
 His solitary wave beside.

Hundred-gated City ! thou
 With gryphon'd porch and avenue
 For denizen giants, serve they now
 But to let one poor mortal thro' ?
 Wide those streaming gates of war
 Ran once with many a conqueror,

Horseman and chariot, to the sound
Of the dry serpent blazoning round
Theban Sesostris' dreaded name.
Where is now the loud acclaim?
Where the trample and the roll,
Shaking staid Earth like a mole?
Sunk to a rush's sigh!—Farewell,
Thou bleached wilderness o'erblown
By treeless winds, unscytheable
Sandbanks, with peeping rocks bestrown
That for thy barrenness seem'st to be
The bed of some retreated sea!
City of Apis, shrine and throne,
Fare thee well! dispeopled sheer
Of thy mighty millions, here
Giant thing inhabits none,
But vast Desolation!

Farewell thee!—and lowly too,
Ye rev'rend sites, colossal names,
Esné and Ombos and Edfou,
Echoing still your bygone fames
In such ponderous syllables,
Howsoe'er forgotten else.
Over white-cliffed Elephantine,
Thro' thy quarries red and gray,
Womb of sublimity, Syene
Onward still I take my way:
Where broad Nile with deafening hymn
Enters the land of Mizraim,
O'er sounding cliffs made musical
By his wave-choral waterfall;
Athwart high Nubia's tawny shelves,
Down which ploughing deep he delves,
Long strider of the level sands,
Three cataract steps to lower lands.
Scarce my fiery breath I cool
In thee, hill-hollowed Ipsambul,
Where primeval Troglodyte
Turned the torrid day to night.
Helmed high within the gloom,
Thy pillaring statues sit sublime,
Taking, each side, colossal room

On granite thrones no king might climb,
And keeping halled state till Doom,
Co-templar Deities with Time.
Or before thy porch profound
By the choked river's antique roll,
From their seats, dry fathoms drowned,
Peering mildly over ground,
Head-free, along the desert shoal,
If not with form discombered whole,
Looking blank on, as they did see
Far o'er this little earthy knoll
Into thy depths, Infinity.

Narrowing now my path begins
Toward the lofty Abyssins ;
Now in silk-soft fleece below,
Shrunk to miniature sound and show,
Tumbos' cataract seems to flow
A visual roar, and that high steep
Jebel Arambo, a step deep.
Now while this keen air renews,
On my strength its aim pursues,
From that old sand-swallowed Isle
Meroe, doubled by the Nile,
Balking before whose watery bar
Vainly Simoom his dragon cheers,
That sandward home from Senaar
Back on his stormy rider rears,
Fierce recusant to daggle still
His dusty wings at that blind will !
So I too, in dragon scorn,
With red breath like the desert-born,
Bicker against the winds that press
Me from that broad wilderness.
Westward then, where Nile divides
In two varicolour tides,
Milky and sable, I shall rise
By that soft galaxy to the skies.

Thanks, Nepenthe fine, for this
Living apotheosis !
Hark ! above me I do hear
Heavenly joybells ringing clear,

And see their golden mouths, ding-dong,
Vibrate with a starry tongue.
Welcome ! welcome ! still they toll
Syllabled sweetly in knell-knoll,
While more deep, with undulous swell,
Chimes unseen the burden-bell,
Mellowing, in the mighty boom
Of his huge sonorous womb,
Their sweet clangour, like the din
Of streams lost in a roaring lynn.
Twilight now o'er lawn and dale
Draws her dew-enwoven veil,
Tender-bosomed flowers to keep
Unruffled in their balmy sleep ;
Her's from planet fair and star
Day's last blushing Hour doth steal,
Those bright rivals to reveal,
And the Queen-Moon, their non-pareil,
Rolling between her noiseless car,
Where in heaven-wide race they reel
Light splintering from each glassy wheel.
Small birds now thro' leafy shed
Rustling haste to bower and bed,
And the Roc, slow winnowing, sails
Heavily homeward thro' the vales
Clanging betimes, while they do cheep,
The tremblers, and more inwood creep.
Then shall not I, in some thick sward
Rest me, like gazelle or pard,
Brinded hyæna or zebir barred ;
Now that even these supple rovers
Hie to caves and heathy covers,
There to sleep till huntress Morn
Rouse them again with her far horn !

Solitary wayfarer !
Minstrel winged of the green wild !
What dost thou delaying here,
Like a wood-bewildered child
Weeping to his far-flown troop,
Whoop ! and plaintive whoop ! and whoop !
Now from rock and now from tree,
Bird ! methinks thou whoop'st to me,

Flitting before me upward still
With clear warble, as I've heard
Oft on my native Northern hill
No less wild and lone a bird,
Luring me with his sweet chee-chee
Up the mountain crags which he
Tript as lightly as a bee,
O'er steep pastures, far among
Thickets and briary lanes along,
Following still a fleeting song !
If such my errant nature, I
Vainly to curb or coop it try
Now that the sundrop thro' my frame
Kindles another soul of flame !
Whoop on, whoop on, thou can'st not wing
Too fast or far, thou well-named thing,
Hoopoe, if of that tribe which sing
Articulate in the desert ring !

Striding the rough mountain mane
Of Earth, her forelock now I gain,
Whence I behold the lucid spheres
As thick as ocean dropt in tears
On the sapphire-paven ciel,
That close now to my head doth wheel.
Brighter the Moon, and brighter glows !
Broader and broader still she grows !
On that steeppling pinnacle
With glance rocks silver-slatted down,
Her radiant ball sits tangible,
Huge pearl of Afric's mountain crown !
Ponderous jewel of Earth's crest !
There, star-studded she doth rest,
Filling every vale and lea
From her lucid fountain free,
Bank high, as with a crystal sea.
Flooded bright each woodland moves
Crisp as the sounding coral groves,
And each emerald lane doth seem
Bed of a diamond-watered stream.
But lo ! what mighty shadows cast
Their lengths upon the glittering vast

Portentous, as with giant reach
Eclipse thro' fields of air did stretch
Printing the lunar hills upon
Earth's disk in darkest colours dun?
Ha ! more true shall Fantasy,
Twin-brother profane to Prophecy,
Interpret yon bright written sign,
Blazoning the dome with sense divine.
Yon far luminary stands
Apparent on these peaked lands,
Meanful device and monogram
Of their veritable name—
The Mountains of the Moon ! long known
On Afric's groin enormous zone,
But trod by mortal me alone !
'Less Gomer here did set his shoon,
Crossing to southern Zanguebar,
And call'd them Jebel-el-Gomar,
Arabiqued, Mountains of the Moon :
Since that double word implies
This sense, and toward the Star they rise
Her semblable footstool in the skies.

Now that she sinks amid the hills
And vaporous gloom her region fills,
Tearful light each orb distils,
Faintly closing his small eye !
Wrapt in stole of sablest dye,
Death-heavy Darkness on his throne
Nods like a corse ! What anguish draws
That sigh, to make Existence pause,
And the deep slumberers under stone
Turn in their wormy beds and groan ?
Yet, a more terrible moan !
Like the buried Titan's sob
Bursting Etna's rocky chains
It shakes huge Afric with a throb,
Her stout girdle scarce sustains.
Hark, another !—but like the sound
Of Hell's breath bubbling up thro' pools profound,
Sent forth in cloudy wise !
And now that Dawn, with flickering plumage gray
Brushes the thick-spun web of Night away,

Two pools in mist and murmur bubble before mine eyes !
 Black-watered that : right o'er
 Its cave, a bust of Mauritanian mood,
 Thick-lipt and carved in negro curls, as rude
 As the grim lake itself in wavy tresses wore :
 This ripples in soft ringlets, and sleek folds
 Of milky undulance, eastward oozing
 The hill's green shoulders down, diffusing
 His wealth of waters o'er the humble wolds :
 Not like his dark Brother making
 His chasmy way, by choice, nor taking
 Precipitous steps into the Atlantic holds.
 Over the smooth well-front was seen
 Cut in a stony table of Syene,
 A head, of that colossal leaven,
 But with mild looks, and patient eyeballs graven,
 Waiting for day !

She rose, maternal Morn !
 With her first golden smile greeting the brow
 Memnonian, and with balmiest sighs
 Breathing her soul of love into those sanguine eyes
 That gazed with large affection on the skies !
 And like the joy of a faint-swelling horn
 Heard far aloof, notes of glad welcome now
 Rose from the steep front of the Goddess-born.

Charactered underneath upon the stone
 I read these mystic words alone :

Memnon—the God of the Blue River—the King
 Of the Endless Valley—Whoever his Spirit
 Will free from earthly fetters, let him mingle
 A cup of darkness here with one of light,
 Fit opiate for Life's fever,
 And so be blest, pouring it on his brain.

Two cups I mingled, dark and light,
 From that black fountain and this white,
 Pouring the opiate deftly down
 The Nile-God's cleft and hollow crown,
 As I divined his will. The air
 Grew vocal for a moment there,
 With out-flown shriek of joy ; and where

Welkin aloft the sunbird sings,
I heard a clap and rush of wings,
As if some earth-pent spirit freed
Rose to the realms of bliss indeed !

Memnon from that day, by the shore
Of Nile, sits murmurless evermore !

Thy claybound spirit is free, and mine
Still in this barry skeleton pine?
No !—and I quaffed from either well
The mingled cup of heaven and hell !

Darkness began to hood the sky,
Methought, once more, the day to die
On this bleak death-bed, but not I !
From the sharp East a blackening wind
Came with broad vans the hills behind,
In her cloud-hung pavilion
Rolling Death's sable sister on,
Portentous Night ! Within the fold
Of its dark valance I was rolled
Whirling, steep down, as in a pall
Down the great gulf's eternal fall.

No sun came forth again ; but gray
As the still rocks on which I lay
Bleaching at last, endured the day.
O'er me the hard sky, massy-paven,
Seemed to be dropping crags from heaven
To make Earth—dust, and hurricanes
Let scatter on her their whistling manes.
So, with his ensigns wet, Monsoon
Swept o'er the Mountains of the Moon,
Dreadfully calling cloud on cloud
From the deep South, that in thick crowd,
Swoln with the summons, bellying ran
To burst their rude strength in the van,
Till mass o'er mass enormous hurled
Heavily toppling stood the world !

Such terror vain Ambition waits
Still on the high tops he would tread :
Stand fast, ye thunder-shaken gates.
Against the rain-flood, o'er my head
Beating like ocean on his bed !
O let me wing unshent again
To sweet Earth's lowest lowliest plain ;
Then let the rushing deluge sweep
Her proudest pinnacles to the deep !

Desert paths of the dry streams !
Swifter than the torrent teems
Scourged by South winds, as I flee
Spread your gray sands firm for me !
Pendant cliffs with sheltering brow
Shade me from destruction now !
Rocky steps of giant stride
Descending Afric, down your side,
Your unhewn smoothness let me slide !
Air ! O air, with thickening breath
Stay me not in the gripe of Death !
Back by the blown locks who doth still
Pull me to his cruel will ;
Let me into thy sightless sea
Like the poor minnow from the shark,
From those fell jaws that gape for me,
Plunge into deepest abysses dark !

Welcome dusky, unsunned dells,
Roofed with savage trees o'erblown,
Caverns in whose dripping cells
Hermit Sadness sits alone !
Eldern forests, whispering dim
Secrets in your dread Sanhedrim,
And nodding Fate on those below ;
Fearless thro' such inquest grim,
Rustling your mossy beards I go.
Fathomless falls for wild Despair !
Gulfs intransible of deep air !
Gladly from yon tempest I
To your terrible shelter fly.
Welcome, rocky vaults and rude,
Cave-continued for the flood

That rolls his serpent-strength between,
Hissing beside me tho' unseen,
Thro' his vast ambush subterrene ;
Chasms with cragged teeth beset,
Swallow me deeper, deeper yet !
Lowliest path is least unsure,
Most sublime most insecure !
Fond Earth, within her parent breast
Finds us, weak little ones, safe room
And thither pain or care opprest,
Sooner or later, as their doom,
All creep for refuge and for rest.

Shadowy aisles of pillared trees
Now my errant fancy please,
Dim cathedral walks like these ;
Nave by numerous transepts crost,
Each in his own long darkness lost,
Cloister and chancel, thick embossed
Their roofs with pendant foliage, thro'
Whose fretted branchwork richly pours
The sun, in golden order due,
His bright mosaic on the floors.

Spreading now the darksome bourne,
Into warm twilight I return,
Still by these umbrageous eaves,
Sheltered : and where the thinner leaves,
With verdant panes, too bright illume,
Glance and pass forward into gloom
Thro' the dim-green air I hear
Only the rush of waters near,
Or see their spray a moment gleam,
Watermotes in the passing beam.

By that visionary shore
Steep channel of continual roar,
Billowy duct of flowing thunder,
That wallows the rooted woodland under,
Wandering I, in dizzy wonder,
Tread the hollow crust that caves
The rueful Erebus of waves

Beneath me surging. Blind I roam
 The wilderness. O gentle Eve !
 Pale Daughter of the Day, receive
 My greeting glad !—All hail, thou dome
 Of God's great Temple, lit so bright
 With lamps of ever-living light,
 Kept trim within those censers rare
 By Virgins quiring to their care,
 Voice-joined, tho' separate in far air.
 Awful Night ! thy sombre plumes,
 Shadowed athwart the moonlight pale,
 Make this rock-bestudded vale
 Gleam like an antique place of tombs,
 With lustre cold that chills the gale.
 Grateful now to fallen me
 This deep tranquillity !
 Here in folded silence fast
 Shall I fix myself at last,
 Till I grow by age as grey
 As the rocks, and stiff as they,
 Making ever here my own
 Statue and monumental stone !

Cliff, of smoothest front sublime,
 Tablet for that old storier Time !
 What huge aboriginal sons
 Of Earth, beat down by vengeful waves,
 Sleep beneath these obliterate stones
 In unmeasurable graves ?
 What mystic word inscribed can show
 His terrible might who sleeps below ?—
 Sinews resolved to wreaths of sand !
 Seams of white dust his bony frame !
 His place on Glory's scroll doth stand
 Blank—or filled up with others' fame !
 Yet was he one that Pelion-high
 Clomb perchance the difficult sky,
 Pelion on Oeta and Ossa heaved
 Till of sight and sense bereaved,
 Storm or sun stricken as I !
 Ay, and shall Adam's pigmy sperm
 Think to reach that sacred sphere
 Which, from high-battled hills infirm,

No Briarean arms came near ;
Or think that his small memory dear,
Writ in the sands, shall aye survive,
While the eternal headstones here
Keep no giant name alive !
The sands of thy own life, Renown,
Run between two creations down,
Few centuries apart ! What need
Glorious thought, or word, or deed,
When all mortal grandeur must
Lie with oblivion in the dust ?

Then hie on to humble lands !
On, still onward let me roam,
O'er sea-broad Sahara sands,
By the cataract's grizzled foam,
Where live-bounding he doth come,
Headlong Niger ! down the rocks,
Swept with his dishevelled locks,
Sable turned to silver flocks,
Like dark rain to driven snow,
When the blasts hibernal blow !
Now my steps as mute proceed
By his solitary roll
Winding round each desert knoll
As a gay enamelled mead,
With its yellow-blossom reed
Single bright thing that doth breed
There ; and rushy tufts of grass
Only sighing as we pass :
This wide waste of air unstirred
By the voice of bee or bird,
Even the soaring eagle's scream
Far off, like music in a dream
Imaged to the ear, is heard.
Strange pleasure in such wild to wander
Following murmurless Meander,
That loses his own serpent folds
Oft within the sabulous wolds.
May not I, ere these be crost,
Grave of all things living, be lost,
Now that in this inky lake,
Dry Afric's mediterranean,

Unsailed sea, the Mountain Snake
Buries his sightless head again?
Yet whate'er my soul inspire,
Purple sweet instinct with fire,
Or that late delirious draught,
Which from lunar wells I quaffed,
Still I turn where sand and sky
Spread in blank boundlessness to mine eye.

Thou, night-shaded Fountain ! pure
Essence of darkness, deep distilled,
'Tis thou that hast my soul, most sure,
With thy sad infusion filled !
Else wherefore love I thus to tread
O'er the dust of Nature dead,
Buried in her own ashes gray,
Without one offspring of her womb
To strew her even a leafy tomb?
Wherefore love I thus to stray,
Finding joy in the lone wild,
Like Desertion's only child,
That in the sunburnt, silent air
Builds his crumbling castles there
And builds and plays with his despair?

Solitude as deep and wide,
Treeless and herbless, never trod
Gray Triton underneath the tide,
Wandering the tawny barrens broad.
All is dumb, and the dead sands
Lie in long warps on both hands,
Furrows incult or barely sown,
Like desecrate lands, with salt alone,
Steed of sterility !—O more fleet
Must be my Arimasian feet
To 'scape this dragon of the air,
Winding me round with sulphury flare,
Than the wild ostrich as she glides
Sheer onward with unpanting sides !

Lo ! in the mute mid wilderness,
What wondrous Creature, of no kind,
His burning lair doth largely press,
Gaze fixt, and feeding on the wind?

His fell is of the desert dye,
And tissue adust, dun-yellow and dry,
Compact of living sands ; his eye
Black luminary, soft and mild,
With its dark lustre cools the wild.
From his stately forehead springs,
Piercing to heaven, a radiant horn !
Lo, the compeer of lion-kings,
The steed self-armed, the Unicorn !
Ever heard of, never seen,
With a main of sands between
Him and approach ; his lonely pride
To course his arid arena wide,
Free as the hurricane, or lie here,
Lord of his couch as his career !
Wherefore should this foot profane
His sanctuary, still domain ?
Let me turn, ere eye so bland
Perchance be fire-shot, like heaven's brand,
To wither my boldness ! Northward now,
Behind the white star on his brow
Glittering straight against the Sun,
Far athwart his lair I run.

What marvellous things I saw besides,
Wandering heaven's wide furnace thro',
With floor of burning sands, and sides,
And glowing cope of glassy blue,
Ne'er could mortal tongue nor ear
Intelligibly tell or hear !
Enow to have seen and sung of those
Beauteous chimeras, called in scorn,
Single of species both, and born
Mid among mankind, that but knows
The Phoenix and the Unicorn
Ev'n now, as dim-seen thro' a horn !
Both symbols of proud solitude,
One of melancholy gladness,
One of most majestic sadness,
And therefore to such neighbourhood
I won, by sympathetic madness,
Where let no other steps intrude !

Across the desert's shrivelled scroll
I past, myself almost to sands
Crumbling, to make another knoll
Amidst the numberless of those lands.

Welcome ! Before my bloodshot eyes,
Steed of the East, a camel stands,
Mourning his fallen lord that dies.
Now, as forth his spirit flies,
Ship of the Desert ! bear me on,
O'er this wavy-bosomed lea,
That solid seemed and staid anon,
But now looks surging like a sea.—
On she bore me, as the blast
Whirling a leaf, to where in calm
A little fount poured dropping-fast
On dying Nature's heart its balm.
Deep we sucked the spongy moss,
And cropt for dates the sheltering palm,
Then with fleetest amble cross
Like desert, fed upon like alm.
That most vital beverage still,
Tho' near exhaust, preserved me till
Now the broad Barbaric shore
Spread its havens to my view,
And mine ear rung with ocean's roar,
And mine eye glistened with its blue !
Till I found me once again
By the ever-murmuring main,
Listening across the distant foam
My native church bells ring me home.
Alas ! why leave I not this toil
Thro' stranger lands, for mine own soil ?
Far from ambition's worthless coil,
From all this wide world's wearying moil,—
Why leave I not this busy broil,
For mine own clime, for mine own soil,
My calm, dear, humble, native soil !
There to lay me down at peace
In my own first nothingness ?

SYLVIA,
OR, THE MAY QUEEN
A LYRICAL DRAMA

CHARACTERS

ROMANZO.
ANDREA. *His Servant.*
GERONYMO.

SYLVIA.
AGATHA. *Her Mother.*
STEPHANIA. }
ROSELLE. } *Peasant Girls.*
JACINTHA. }
Peasants, &c.

SPIRITS.

MORGANA. *Queen of the Fairies.*
NEPHON.
OSME.
FLORETTA.
Fairies.

ARARACH. *King of the Fiends.*
GRUMIEL.
MOMIEL.
Demons.

The Scene lies in Italy, amongst the Apennines.

SYLVIA,
OR, THE MAY QUEEN

ACT I.

Scene I.

A DEEP-DOWN valley, with a stream ;
Fit haunt for a poetic dream :
A cot fast by the water-edge,
A bower, and a rustic bridge ;
The grass as green as dewy Spring
Had just beswept it with his wing,
Or the moist splendour of the Morn,
Did every glistening blade adorn :
As soft the breeze, as hush the air,
As Beauty's self were sleeping there.
Enter ROMANZO on the heights,
Who sings the song our Author writes.

ROMANZO. O beauteous valley ! grassy-coated mountains !

Soft flowery banks, sweet pillows for unrest !

O silent glen of freshly-rolling fountains,

If there be peace on Earth, 'tis in thy breast !

[Descends.]

At length, Romanzo, stay thy wandering feet :

Here be thy home, here be thy resting-place.

I've often heard the road to Paradise

Lay through the gates of Death ; it is not so—

This is Elysium, yet I have not died !

Or Death has come so softly, that I never

Heard even his footfall : he has taken me

When I was sleeping on some bank of roses,

And only said—Sleep on ! O beauteous scene !

Beyond what Hope, or fairy-footed Fancy,

Ever could lead me to ! The sunny hills
 Lightening their brows, appear to smile at me,
 So lost in sweet astonishment. Even I
 Could smile, who have not smiled since I could feel.
 The melancholy God loves me no more ;
 My spirit bursts forth in song (Joy's eloquence),
 And like yon tremulous nursling of the air,
 Perch'd on and piping from a silver cloud,
 I cannot choose but pour my strain of praise
 To this most beautiful Glen.

Beautiful Glen ! let the song of a Rover
 Awake the sweet Echo that lies on thy hill ;
 Let her say what I say of thy beauty twice over,
 And still as I praise let her mimic me still. [*Echo.*]

Beautiful Glen of sweet groves and sweet bowers !
 My voice is unworthy to praise thee alone :
 Let all thy sweet birds tell to all thy sweet flowers
 The tale that I teach them in words of their own. [*Birds.*]

Beautiful Glen of the white-flowing torrent !
 If Spirit or Nymph be grown vocal again,
 Let her tune her sweet voice to the roll of thy current,
 And mock me with murmuring—Beautiful Glen !
 [*Voice within*—“Beautiful Glen !”]

Ha ! what was that ?—was it a voice indeed,
 Or but the repetition of my words
 Made by some hollow cave ?—Never before
 Came syllables from Echo's faltering tongue
 So exquisitely clear !—Haply, I dream,
 And this is all illusion : soft ! I'll prove it—
 [*Sings*] “Beautiful Glen !”

[*The voice repeats* “Beautiful Glen !”]

Wondrous !—this is no voice
 Of earth, yet speaks to mortal apprehension !
 O who—who art thou, minstrel invisible ?
 Tell me, who art thou that dost sing so sweetly ?

[*The voice sings*] Sing, and I shall answer meetly.

ROMANZO. Who art thou that sing'st so sweetly,
 Echo, Echo, is it thou ?

[*Voice*] Now I'm asked the question meetly,

I will answer meetly now.

ROMANZO. Who art thou?

[Voice] Perhaps what thou art !

ROMANZO. I'm a rover !

[Voice] So am I !

ROMANZO. Art thou mortal?

[Voice] Not as thou art !

ROMANZO. Art thou spirit?

[Voice] Come and try !

ROMANZO. Now I've ask'd the question meetly,
Answer me as meetly now.

[Voice] I have answer'd thee discreetly,
More I cannot answer now.

ROMANZO. Shall I believe in this?—Ears, can I trust your evidence? I have likened ye oft to those wild sea-shells which are full of most delicate music born in their own hollows: was this but the fantastical creation of yours? No! it was plain as light; and if unreal, then is yon marble dome but a vapour of the imagination!—What meant this syren of the air? Why did it court me on?—No matter! As the poor swimmer dives for a jewel at the bottom of the perilous gulf, so must thou too, Romanzo, seek thy fortune in the depths of this mystery; though, like him, the waves of ruin may o'erwhelm thee.—Ha! what a palace is here! a rural one!—Nature, thou hast a Doric hand, but a most Corinthian fancy!—Or is this, too, a work of enchantment? Has it been transported hither while I was dreaming, by some genii, the mighty slaves of a magician, or raised by the wand of fairy Maimoun, as we read of in the tales of the East?—To be sure, this jessamine tapestry is thick enough to hide a less modest dwelling. How prettily it smiles through the leaves! like a russet maiden holding a rose before her beauty to enhance by concealing it. Does a woodman live here, or an anchorite?—It is the very retreat for an uncanonized saint, or the snow-bearded tenant of a wilderness. At home, father?

[Knocks.

Enter AGATHA.

AGATHA. Your will, signior?

ROMANZO. Pardon, good dame! I have need of that for my rudeness, ere I can expect any other favour. Pardon, I beseech you, for my intrusion.

AGATHA. It needs none, signior! The traveller is welcome to my poor cottage, though but few enter it.

ROMANZO. Strange! for I think its beauty might allure the steps of a courtier. Do many people inhabit this valley?

AGATHA. Two only, signior; myself and daughter.

ROMANZO. Oh! then it was she I heard just now sing so divinely?

AGATHA. My daughter, signior? no; she is now far away on the hills, gathering wild flowers or simples.

ROMANZO. What then, do you keep a mocking bird?

AGATHA. The echo, signior, is loud in this place: you are now standing on the plat we call "*Echo's ground*." Say *echo*! and it will be thrice answered.

ROMANZO. Ay, but can your echo maintain a conversation?—for here was one, I assure you.

AGATHA. Nay, signior, I cannot account for it; your senses must have been deceived.

ROMANZO. Perhaps so. [*Aside.*] But it is a mystery I will rather die than leave unravelled. [*Aloud.*] Prithee, dame, if a wanderer may presume on your good nature, will you afford me a night's lodging in your pretty bird-cage?

AGATHA. Willingly, signior, if its poor accommodations may content you.

ROMANZO. Poor!—while the vine forms the gable of your tenement, and hangs at your window, you have meat, drink, and shelter together. Thanks, gentle hostess!

AGATHA. Pray walk in. [*Exeunt into the cottage.*]

Scene II.

A view like one of Fairy-land,
As gay, as gorgeous, and as grand:
Millions of bright star-lustres hung
The glittering leaves and boughs among;
High-battled, domy-palaces,
Seen crystal through the glimmering trees,
With spires and dancing minarets,
Just darting from their icy seats:
Pavilions, diamond-storied towers,
Dull'd by the aromatic bowers;
Transparent peaks and pinnacles,
Like streams shot upward from their wells,
Or cave-dropt, Parian icicles.

Green haunts, and deep enquiring lanes,
Wind through the trunks their grassy trains ;
Millions of chaplets curl unweft
From boughs, beseeching to be reft,
To prune the clustering of their groves,
And wreath the brows that Beauty loves.
Millions of blossoms, fruits, and gems,
Bend with rich weight the massy stems ;
Millions of restless dizzy things,
With ruby tufts, and rainbow wings,
Speckle the eye-refreshing shades,
Burn through the air, or swim the glades :
As if the tremulous leaves were tongues,
Millions of voices, sounds, and songs,
Breathe from the aching trees that sigh,
Near sick of their own melody.

Raised by a magic breath whene'er
The pow'rs of Fairy-land are here,
And by a word as potent blown
To sightless air, when they are gone,
This scene of beauty now displays
Both flank and front in sheets of blaze :
Spirits in an ascending quire
Touch with soft palm the golden wire :
While some on wing, some on the ground,
In mazy circles whirl around :
Kissing and smiling, as they pass,
Like sweet winds o'er the summer grass :
NEPHON and OSME chief are seen,
In heavenly blue, and earthly green,
The one and other : both unite
With trim FLORETTA veil'd in white ;
And mincing measures small and neat,
Mimic the music with their feet.
After their dance is done, the chorus
Hints something new descends before us.

CHORUS OF SPIRITS.

Gently !—gently !—down !—down !
From the starry courts on high,
Gently step adown, down
The ladder of the sky.

Sunbeam steps are strong enough
 For such airy feet !—
 Spirits, blow your trumpets rough,
 So as they be sweet !

Breathe them loud, the Queen descending,
 Yet a lowly welcome breathe,
 Like so many flowerets bending
 Zephyr's breezy foot beneath !

MORGANA *descends amid sweet and solemn music.*

MORGANA. No more, my Spirits !—I have come from
 whence

Peace, with white sceptre wafting to and fro,
 Smoothes the wide bosom of the Elysian world.
 Would 'twere as calm on Earth ! But there are some
 Who mar the sweet intent. Ev'n in these bounds,
 Ararach, wizard vile ! who sold himself
 To Eblis, for a brief sway o'er the fiends,
 Would set up his dark canopy, and make
 Our half o' the vale, by force or fraud, his own.
 We must take care he do not.—Where's that ouphe ?
 That feather-footed, light-heeled, little Mercury ?
 That fairy-messenger ? whom we saw now
 Horsed on a dragon-fly wing round the fields ?
 Come out, sir !—Where is Nephon ?

NEPHON. Here am I ! here am I !
 Softer than a lover's sigh,
 Swifter than the moonbeam, I
 Dance before thee duteously.

MORGANA. Light gentleman, say whither hast thou been ?

NEPHON. Over the dales and mossy meadows green.

MORGANA. Doing the deed I told thee ?

NEPHON. Else would I fear thou'st scold me !

MORGANA. Led'st thou the Rover downward to the glen ?

NEPHON. Down, down to the glen,
 Through forest and fen ;
 O'er rock, and o'er rill,
 I flattered him still ;
 With chirp, and with song,
 To lure him along ;

Like a bird hopping onward from bramble to briar,
I led the young Wanderer nigher and nigher !

MORGANA. None of your idle songs ! speak to me plain.

NEPHON. I laid a knotted riband in his path,
Which he took up ; kiss'd—'twas so fine !—and put it
Into his breast : *Ting! ting!* said I, from out
A bush half down the dale : he gazed. *Ting! ting!*
Said I again. On came he, wondering wide,
And stumbling oft, ha ! ha !—but ne'er the less,
He followed sweet *ting! ting!* down the hill-side,
E'en to the bottom : where I mock'd and left him.

MORGANA. I'll bring thee a sweet cup of dew for this,
Cold from the moon.

NEPHON. Meantime, I'll drain a flower
Fill'd with bright tears from young Aurora's eye.

MORGANA. Skip not away, sir !—List what thou must do.
False Ararach doth love the gentle maid
Who shepherds in this vale : nay, he would have her
Sit on his iron throne, and rule with him.
She has oft wept, and call'd Heaven pitiless,
So that I've laugh'd to see her needless pain.
She is my favourite, and I will protect her :
I've search'd the wilderness of Earth all o'er
To find her a fit bridegroom : this is he
Whom thou hast guided hither.

NEPHON. A trim youth !

MORGANA. Be it thy business to search out the wiles,
Prevent the malice, curb the violence,
With which the spiteful monarch will assail him.
Ev'n now he scents some new-come virtue here,
And plots its quick destruction. Swift, away !
Thou'lt see me nich'd within a hovering cloud,
Pointing thee what to do. When thou would'st know
How to direct thyself, look up to Heaven,
And light will fall upon thee. Swift, away !

NEPHON. Away ! away ! away !

Away will I skip it !

Away will I trip it !

Flowers, take care of your heads as I go !

Who has a bright bonnet

I'll surely step on it,

And leave a light print of my minikin toe !

Away ! away ! away !

[*Vanishes.*]

MORGANA. I've seen a man made out of elder pith
More steady than that puppet !—Yet, he's careful,
Even where he seems most toyish.—Virgin Spirit !—
Come hither, fair Floretta !

FLORETTA. As the murmuring bird-bee comes,
Circling with his joyous hums,
Red-lipt rose, or lily sweet—
Thus play I about thy feet !

MORGANA. Thou art the Queen of Flowers, and lov'st
to tend

Thy beauteous subjects. Thou dost spread thy wing
Between the driving rain-drop and the rose,
Shelt'ring it at thy cost. I've seen thee stand
Drowning amid the fields to save a daisy,
And with warm kisses keep its sweet life in.
The shrinking violet thou dost cheer ; and raise
The cowslip's drooping head : and once didst cherish
In thy fond breast a snowdrop, dead with cold,
E'en till thy cheek grew paler than its own.

FLORETTA. Ay, but it never smiled again ! Ah, me !

MORGANA. Go now, since beauty is so much thy care,
Sweetness and innocence—go now, I say,
And guard the human lily of this vale.
Follow thy mad-cap brother, and restrain
His ardour with thy gentleness.

FLORETTA. Ere thou say *Begone* ! I'm gone :
'Tis more slowly said than done !

[*Vanishes.*]

MORGANA. Osmé, thou fragrant spirit ! where art thou ?

OSME. Rocking upon a restless marigold,
And in its saffron, leafy feathers roll'd ;
But with a bound I'm with you here—behold !

MORGANA. Hast thou been sipping what the wild bee hides
Deep in his waxen cave, thou smell'st so sweet ?

OSME. No : I would never rob the minstrel-thing,
That lulls me off to sleep with murmuring,
And, as I slumber, fans me with his wing.

MORGANA. My gentle elfe !—Come thou, come thou
with me :

I've an apt business for thy strength. Sit here,
On my light car, and be the charioteer ;

Guide thou my trembling birds of Paradise,
That prune themselves from this dull earth to rise,
And cry with painful joy to float amid the skies.
Ascend ye other Spirits all with me !

CHORUS.

See the radiant quire ascending,
Leaving misty Earth below,
With their varied colours blending
Hues to shame the water-bow.
Softly, slowly, still ascending
Many an upward airy mile !
To the realms of glory wending,
Fare thee well, dim Earth, awhile !

Scene III.

The jasmined cottage in the glen
Presents its flowery front again :
Opening its gem-bestudded door
Is seen the Youth we saw before ;
He finds his Hostess on the green,
Who at her purring wheel hath been,
Since Phosphor raised his ocean-cry,
As nimbly he sprang up the sky,
His towering walk to 'gin betimes,
Lest Titan catch him as he climbs.

Were I an artist I could etch
E'en now a pretty moral sketch :
The widow, with a serious look,
Conning her distaff as a book ;
Her eyes on earthly duties bent,
Her mind on higher things intent :
The youngster worships all he sees
As he were well content with these :
His the broad brow of admiration,
Her's the pale smile of resignation ;
His Grief is old, his Joy is new,
Her Joy is dead,—and Sorrow too !

Now, while they talk, in silence I
May underneath the rose tree lie.

ROMANZO. It is true ! it is true !—This scene is too bright for an illusion !—Joy ! ecstasy ! I tread the earth ! I hear the song of birds, and the fall of waters !—No ! my senses could not so far deceive me !—Oh, how I feared, on waking, to find all that had passed a dream !—Sun, I thank thee, for dispelling with thy glorious light the mists of doubt and apprehension !—Nay, here is living testimony !—Good morrow, hostess !—Why, Fortune herself does not turn the wheel faster !

AGATHA. I wish she were obliged to turn it as steadily.

ROMANZO. Would that she had your beechen wheel, and you her golden one, even for a single round !

AGATHA. She would be a fool to make the exchange ; and I, perhaps, no better.—May she be as kind to you, signior, as you wish her !

ROMANZO. Thanks, my good dame !—What ! are your birds always so merry at matins ? or is it me whom they welcome so joyfully ?

AGATHA. You and the sun, I suppose, signior.

ROMANZO. Ah ! I doubt whether the god has not the greater share of the compliment.—But, hostess ! kind hostess, what angel-voice was that I heard this morning ? It thrilled my very heart-strings with pleasure !

AGATHA. Are you quite sure it was an angel you heard, signior ?

ROMANZO. Truly, I would think it !

AGATHA. Else, I should have said it was no more divine a being than my daughter.

ROMANZO. Oh, for the love you bear her, say not so !—If she be such a cherub, Earth cannot pretend to keep her !—Yet, by our Lady, we have need of a saint or two here, for there is no lack of sinners.

AGATHA. Oh, sir, you must not talk so wildly. My daughter rises when the lark is but shaking the dew off his breast ; she is almost as light to mount the hills as he the heavens ; and it is nearly as hard to get the one as the other to speak without singing.

ROMANZO. Whither has she gone ?

AGATHA. Do you see that little bird I spoke of, hitching himself, as it were, up the sky ?

ROMANZO. Yes, as if he were scaling an invisible ladder. What of him ?

AGATHA. You might as well climb the stepless air and catch that voice, that singing speck in the clouds—for he is

now no more,—as overtake my Sylvia. But they will both, wild-ones as they are, sink at once into their nests when their duty calls them.

ROMANZO. Well, I must be patient.—From your speech, good lady, I surmise—pardon me—that you have not always lived in this secluded valley.

AGATHA. Not always, sir, as you say. My fortunes were once higher, though my wishes never. Had my husband been but left to me, I had not regretted the loss of worldly treasures. He, however, died, in the field of glory, as they call it,—and that was also the death of my happiness. In that fatal plain of Aost—

ROMANZO. Ha! it is something to have fallen with Bayard!

AGATHA. Little to the widow :—Hark!—

[*Song without*] Oh, sweet to rove
The wilds we love,
Soft glade, smooth valley, and mountain steep—

AGATHA. She comes! My bird—

ROMANZO. The voice! the lovely voice!—Show thyself, chantress! lest I go mad with expectation!

AGATHA. Pray, signior, retire into the arbour: hide yourself in the foliage. Silent is the nightingale when the stranger's eye is upon her.—Ah! roamer!

[*SYLVIA appears on the bridge.*]

AGATHA. Come hither, truant! and let age play the child in thy bosom.—Where hast thou been, wanderer! tell me?

SYLVIA. Oh, sweet to rove
The wilds we love,
Soft glade, smooth valley, and mountain steep;
Ere birds begin
Their morning din.
Bright sun abed, and bright flowers asleep.

AGATHA. Come to my arms!

ROMANZO (*within the arbour*). Is it a sylph or wood-nymph that glitters before me?

SYLVIA (*approaching*).
While Cynthia looks
Still in the brooks

And sees her beauty begin to wane :
 Down in the dell
 Her silver shell
 Seems hung from Heav'n by a sightless chain.

 To see the elves
 Prepare themselves
 To climb the beams of the slanting moon,
 Or swiftly glide
 In bells to hide
 And press their pillows of scent at noon.

 To pluck the gems
 That bow the stems
 Of flowers, in meadow or secret glen ;
 To ope their breasts,
 And trim their crests,
 And spread their beautiful looks again.

AGATHA. No longer ! no longer !

SYLVIA. Oh sweet ! oh sweet !
 And sweeter yet,
 My crown of roses, my pearls of dew,
 To come ! to come !
 Once more to home,
 With flow'rs, and kisses as sweet, for you !

ROMANZO (*Bursting from the arbour*). Angels are brighter than I dreamt them !

SYLVIA. Ha ! Morgana defend me !

AGATHA. Fear not, my daughter. Thou knowest there is no evil spirit can enter this half of the glen. Look not so strange at him.

SYLVIA. Evil !—Oh, if that creature be evil, I cannot be good !—It is not one of Morgana's courtiers, is it ? They take all shapes that are delightful.

AGATHA. This is my daughter, sir ; daughter, this is our guest. [*Aside.*] Youth salutes youth as rose doth rose—they blush at each other, and sigh—I must be prudent here ; these new acquaintances will be near ones, though they keep the matter so silent.

SYLVIA. Some bee hath got into my bosom ; out, stranger !

ROMANZO. Lady ?

AGATHA. I will bestir me now: you shall taste our fruits and cream. [*Lays a table.*] Grapes here—bread there—honey—Both! both through the heart!—Two birds upon one bough with the same arrow!—Cupid is a rare sportsman!—So; ay—A leaf to garnish these strawberries—Love at first sight is an old adage, but I never thought till now it was a true one.—I must know more of this stranger.

ROMANZO. O fairest!

SYLVIA. O rarest!

Both. Creature of no mortal birth!

ROMANZO. If thou'rt woman,

SYLVIA. If thou'rt human,

Both. Heaven is sure outdone on earth!

ROMANZO. Pearly brow and golden hair,
Lips that seem to scent the air,
Eyes as bright, and sweet, and blue,
As violets fill'd with orbs of dew.

O fairest!

SYLVIA. O rarest! &c.

SYLVIA. God-like form, and gracious mien,
As he once a king had been!
Glory's star is on his brow,
He is King of Shepherds now!

O rarest!

ROMANZO. O fairest! &c.

AGATHA. Come! come!—you are playing the birds' parts, and they will play yours at this fruit-table, if you thus leave it them.—Come!

[*They sit down to table.*]

Scene closes.

Scene IV.

A shadowy dell, from whence arise
Fen-pamper'd clouds that blot the skies,
And from their sooty bosoms pour
A blue and pestilential shower.
High in the midst a crag-built dome
Ruder than Cyclops' mountain-home,
Or that the blood-born giants piled
When Earth was with their steps defiled.

Lightning has scorch'd and blasted all
 Within this dark cavernous hall ;
 Through every cranny screams a blast
 As it would cleave the rocks at last ;
 Loud-rapping hail spins where it strikes,
 And rain runs off the roof in dykes ;
 And crackling flame, and feathery sleet,
 Hiss in dire contest as they meet ;
 Tempests are heard to yell around,
 And inward thunders lift the ground.

In front a dismal tomb-like throne,
 Which Horror scarce would sit upon :
 Yet on this throne doth sit a thing
 In apish state, misnamed a king ;
 A ghastlier Death, a skeleton,
 Not of a man, but a baboon.
 His robe a pall, his crown a skull
 With teeth for gems, and grinning full ;
 His rod of power in his hand
 A serpent writhing round a wand :
 With this he tames the gnashing fiends,
 Soul-purchased to assist his ends ;
 Yet still they spit, and mouthe, and pierce,
 If not with fangs, with eyes as fierce,
 Each other—while behind they seek
 Their sly revenge and hate to wreak.

Hear now the WIZARD (with a grin
 Meant for a smile) his speech begin.

ARARACH. Silence, curst demons !—Listen to me, or
 I'll strike ye dumb as logs !—Breathe no more flames
 In one another's faces, but pen up
 Each one his fiery utterance while I speak !—
 Silence, I say !—and cower before me, slaves !—
 I must and will have all this Valley mine !—

Demons. You must and shall !

ARARACH. Silence, and down !—hear me !—
 We've sworn indeed—but what are oaths to us ?
 Oaths are to bind, where there's some touch of honour,
 Though not enough. It were a crime against
 The majesty of Sin, for us to keep
 An oath ; and honour is dishonourable
 Amongst the fiends, whose glory is in shame.

We'll break the truce, I say !

Demons. We will ! we'll break it !

ARARACH. Silence !—'Tis true, I and that witch Morgana
Have battled long about this place : we halved it
At our last contest, when her ivory spear
Wounded my basilisk, and made him bite me
Here in the wrist, or I had crush'd the minion.

Demons. Vengeance !—war !—war !—

ARARACH. Down with that trump !—not so !—
We must be cunning, for yon queen is wise.
I'll first secure the mountain-gill I love ;
Sylvia, the shepherdess : who else may fly,
Scared by the din of arms : perhaps be scorch'd
Or kill'd amid the fray.—Spirits and Horrors !

All. Ay ! ay ! ay !

ARARACH. Which of you loves a mischievous adventure ?

All. I, my lord !—I !—I !—I !

ARARACH. That will hurt men,
Please me, and gain great praise ?—Who speaks ?

All. All ! all !

ARARACH. But there's some danger in it : you must face
Morgana and her imps. What ! does that fright ye ?
Cowards !—Will none leap forward ?

[GRUMIEL comes forward.

Ha ! brave Grumiel !

MOMIFL. (*Coming forward*)

Master, I'll do the mischief ; let me, pray thee !

Were it to kill a baby in its play,

Ravin a leaguer'd city's corn, or drain

The traveller's only well i' the sanded wilds,

That his dry heart shall crumble ; yea, the beauty

Laid warmly in her bridegroom's treasuring arms,

Shall turn a corpse-cheek to his morning kisses

If thou wilt have it so.—Let me, I pray thee !

ARARACH. Good ! Good !—Go both of ye !—Thou my
bold slave !

And thou, my sly one !—aid him with thy strength,

And he will prompt thy dulness.

GRUMIEL. Hang him, poltroon !

Must I divide my glory with a knave

Who winks at a drawn blade ?—a foul-mouth'd cur,

That bites the heel and runs !

MOMIEL. Master, yon fool

Hath no more brains than a cauliflower ; pray

Let him not go with me !—An alehouse board
Sets him to spell : he cannot count his fingers
Without a table-book.

GRUMIEL. Curse ye, vile babbler !—hound !—Mouse-
hearted wretch !—

MOMIEL. How wittily he calls names,
Like an ostler's paraquito !

ARARACH. Ye will prate,
Both of ye in my presence, will ye ?—Take thou that—
And thou another ? [*Strikes them*] Ay, stand there and writhe,
But whine not, ev'n for pain. Ye'll say, forsooth,
What ye would have !—Listen to my commands,
And do them to the tittle, ye were best !—
Go forth, but stealthily : we'll try at first
What may be done by craft. I'd rather gain
One treacherous point, than win a battle-field.
Go forth, I say ; and use all smooth deceit
To wile the Maid into our bounds : or, if
She is too coy, and fearful, being warn'd
Of our intents by some sly ouphe, then hear
What ye shall do. A youth has lately wander'd
Into this bourne, whom by my art I know
The witch hath for this Nymph selected spouse.
Him shall ye seize ; for he is all unversed
In these wild paths, and is a hot-brain, too,
That loves a deed of peril for its name.
If we could grip him, the elf-queen would scarce
Make up the loss ; at least her present aim
Would be thus baffled, and our road left clear.
Ye know your business : off ! and do it wisely !
Grumiel, be thou the master ; and thou, sirrah !
Counsel him to thy best.

MOMIEL. [*Aside*] Oh ay, I'll lead him !—
I'll be his Jack with the Lantern !

GRUMIEL. Follow me,
Thou muttering slave !

ARARACH. If you do take the youth,
Brain him not : do you hear me ?—We will keep him
Alive in torture here : perchance the Nymph
(Whom they will give love-potions) may be tempted
Thus to approach our realm, and lose herself
Ere she find him. That were a triumph worth
Laying ten plots for. Vanish !

Demons. Way for the King ! [*They vanish separately.*]

ACT II.

Scene I.

THE homestead of a thrifty peasant,
Quiet, secure, well-built, and pleasant ;
Its eaves are moist and green with age,
Its windows wattled like a cage :
From out the tell-tale chimney curl
Blue wreaths of smoke with easy whirl ;
A huge domestic elder tree
Shades the dear cot maternally ;
While the sweet woodbine on its walls
Sits weaving her fine coronals,
Dropping betimes a careless gem
From some loose twisted diadem,
And looking down as she would stoop
To pick her fallen jewels up.
In front a narrow garden blows,
With formal flowers set out in rows,
With gravell'd walks, smooth as the sands
Laid down by Triton's webbed hands ;
Neater, I ween, though not much ampler,
Than wee miss works upon her sampler,
And looking like a cit's parterre
Amid the mountain grandeur there ;
For some, bred in the wilderness,
By contrast love wild Nature less
Than those who gasp within the town
To range the hill, and roam the down,
Loving wild loveliness alone.

The cottage-back, if you must hear,
Shuts out a liquid murmurer,
(But you may catch his sullen roar
More loud when opes the thorough-door,
And see him far a-field betray
With shining scales his serpent way.)
Ev'n in that Isle by Vesper fann'd,
Which all the world calls "Snug-man's Land,"
The land of heartfelt, homely bliss,
There's not a snigger cot than this.

One side leans oldly 'gainst the hill,
 And t'other props a crony mill
 That aye keeps clacking, clacking still ;
 As if it never would have done
 Its tale to its companion.

Two smiling lasses (fair ROSELLE,
 And STEPHANIE, a village belle)
 Are seated at an oaken table
 That scarce to bear the weight is able
 Of fruits, and roots, and cates, and pies :
 A flagon of portentous size
 Stands, like the urn of ancient Po,
 From whence his sea-bound surges go
 Bellying, the table-foot beside ;
 From which a wrinkle-smoothing tide
 Pours the burnt traveller you see
 Into his cup right frequently.
 It is a quaint and humorous wight ;
 His eye proclaims him : ANDREA hight,
 More of his character I could
 Discover, *certainly*, if I would ;
 But pray let your own eyes and ears
 Serve as your own interpreters.

ANDREA. O my unfortunate Master ! O my kind—O !—
 STEPHANIA. Another bowl of cream !

ANDREA. Thanks, gentle signorina !—if it were deep
 enough to drown me, miserable that I am ! it would be
 only the more deeply welcome !—O sweet and excellent
 [*drinks*] master !

ROSELLE. Look what a tempting bunch of grapes ! Do
 pluck one.

ANDREA. Are they good for a hoarseness ?

ROSELLE. Better than a box of lozenges, I warrant
 them.

ANDREA. Say you so ?—Then I will consent to devour
 a sprig or two, for I am hoarse with lamentation and bawling.
 —O comely youth ! O taper young gentleman ! O kind,
 noble, chaste, sweet-spoken vagabond master !—shall I ever
 behold—

STEPHANIA. Such a cheese as the moon was never made
 of ! I pressed it with my own two hands. 'Tis the purest,
 finest goat's-milk cheese—pray, signior, have a slice of it.

ANDREA. It will strengthen me for whooping and calling, else, I would not touch it for diamonds! It will make me *ma-a* like a he-goat on a rock-top when he misses the beard of his charmer.

ROSELLE. Indeed now, you must try our apricots and walnuts. Here is another loaf hot from the oven.

STEPHANIA. Do not spare the pasty; its fellow is in the larder. Help yourself to another cup of wine: the flagon is beside you.

ANDREA. Alas!—I cannot.

STEPHANIA. Pray be entreated.

ANDREA. I am inexorable!—No! I will abstain—mortify—I will make a desperate vow—Hear me, thou adorable flagon! If ever I drink a single cup of thy contents, while my dear master—

ROSELLE. Nay, it is too late: you have had some half-dozen already.

ANDREA. The very reason I can take no more!

STEPHANIA. Wherefore, dear signior?

ANDREA. Simply because there is no more to take! the wine has evacuated its tenement; the flagon is empty.

STEPHANIA. Run, dear sister! Go: fetch out our mother's flasket of cordial. You can guess where it lies. It is better than a hogshead of ordinary wine.—Here it is.

ROSELLE. [*Filling out a goblet.*] Now, bachelor!

ANDREA. [*Taking the goblet.*] Do you see this vessel? Do you mark its capacity and dimensions? Well:—I have rained the full of this from either flood-gate, three-score of times at a modest computation, since I lost my unfortunate master yesterday morning. Can you wonder if my lachrymatories be in want of replenishment? [*Drinks.*]

STEPHANIA. Alas! true-hearted youth!

ROSELLE. Forlorn creature!

ANDREA. I have drunk nothing but salt water from the brine-pits of mine eyes, since my master mislaid himself among these villainous mountains. And that, you know, were sufficient to make me as dry as a turnspit in the dog-days; or the cook of a ship's company on pickled allowance, in the latitude of the line, at noon-tide, when the sun looks like a red-hot shot in a furnace, and the air would stew salamanders.

STEPHANIA and ROSELLE. True! true!

ANDREA. I have spouted as much water through my head as the lion on an aqueduct, or a whale in a fit of

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sneezing. Verily, I never wept so much for any two of my grandmothers, though the last left me heir to all she had in the world, *videlicet*: her blessing. Have you no sad verses to suit the occasion? no miserable rhymes? no ballad about love and murder, or elegy on the death of a favourite lap-dog? Pray consult your albums.

[*Sings*] Oh, Sorrow was ever a thirsty soul,
As Margery did discover;
For every tear she drank a bowl,
That her eyes might still run over!
[*Drinks.*]

The melancholics always give me the poetics: therefore, O sweet hostesses! pity my hapless situation.

STEPHANIA. In what respect besides being a melancholy poet?

ANDREA. Oh, I have lost the most amiable, provoking, excellent, incorrigible whistle-cap of a master that ever poor fellow had since the days of knight-errantry. The guide of my youth! the protector of my innocence! the defender of my virtue!—Here do I find myself like a distressed damosel, or the Wandering Jew, in the midst of this frightful wilderness, without knowing either how I came into it, or how I am to get out of it: looking as strange and bewildered as a flying-fish caught in the shrouds, or a wild-man-of-the-woods in a show-box. I have not even a word to put forth in excuse if a shepherd's cur chose to ask me my business. Wherefore and therefore:—O unfortunate Andrea: O luckless Pimpinella! O miserable Ribobolo! O unfortunate, luckless, and miserable Andrea della Pimpinella di Ribobolo!

ROSELLE. What shall we do with him? he is again in a fit of the poetics.

STEPHANIA. Prithee, friend Andrea della Pimpinella di Ribobolo, do not frighten the squirrels.

ANDREA. I must give vent to my passion; I must relieve my oppressed heart with an effusion of some sort or other. [*Drinks.*]

STEPHANIA. Only that the cup has a bottom, you might think it was a spy-glass.

ROSELLE. He is going to balance it on his nose; stay a little.

ANDREA. Would this bottle were pewter that I might squeeze it !—Slidikins ! where did that other sun come from ? No ! 'tis the sun and moon shining together : excellent !—I find this wine begin to elevate me.

[*Andrea in his chair is slowly raised from the ground.*]

You need not draw away the table, though.—Why, hostesses !—where are you going ?—Sinking !—sinking !—Mercy upon me ! do they live in a well ?

STEPHANIA and ROSELLE. O strange !

ANDREA. Have I been singing with Mermaidsens ?—Down ! down !—Still ?—Hew ! by Saint George and the Dragon, they are on a mining expedition !—Out upon ye, speculators !—Alas !—O !—Uds my life ! is their father a pump-sinker ?

STEPHANIA. Wonderful ! wonderful !

ROSELLE. Hush, sister ! I have heard of these moon-calves. He is one, I am sure, by his roaring.

STEPHANIA. And his great mouth. Whither is he going ?

ROSELLE. Only to catch larks for his supper. Or may be his dam bleats for him : did you not hear him cry out *the moon ! the moon !* this moment ?

ANDREA. Now could I weep pitcherfuls !

STEPHANIA. I thought he was a flighty sort of a gentleman. But lo ! where he rises !—Take care of your hat, sir !

ROSELLE. Hold on by a tree-top !

ANDREA. Hold on by a fiddlestick !—Catch you some root or tuft, or brushwood ! Get astride of some bough, I tell ye ! O sinful pair ! what have ye been doing that the fiend should carry you down in this manner ?

STEPHANIA and ROSELLE. O friend Andrea, what can you have done that you should deserve to go to Heaven in such a hurry ?

ANDREA. Take to your marrow bones ;—kneel—pray—confess,—out with all your iniquities !—Weep, children ! roar ! sing !—Have you no *pater*, or *ave*, or *credo* ?—What do the fools gape at ?—Begin !—Beat your breasts ! maul your petticoats ! take down the pride of your tuckers !—O miserable women !—Tear your hands ! wring your hair !—Will yet not ?—Did you ever see such a couple of unconverted Magdalens ?

STEPHANIA and ROSELLE. Alas ! alas ! he is growing as small as a tom-tit !

ANDREA. Son of my father ! they look like two white

mice at the door of a trap!—Farewell, hostesses!—good-bye!—O sad! O marvellous!—they are not the size of their noses!—Phew!—I begin to smell brimstone and pitchforks!

STEPHANIA *and* ROSELLE. Let us pray for his safety.

ANDREA. They are at it! they are at it!—Now is there some hope of their perdition from utter salvation. Obstinate jades! they would not do so when I told them. Louder! louder!—I can scarcely catch a mumble. Who the vengeance, d'ye think, is to hear you at this height?—They are sighing in anguish and contrition. Poor souls!—deeper and deeper!—He has them now by the ankles: O kind Satan! send them a gentle swingeing, if thou hast any compassion in thy sooty bosom!

STEPHANIA. Poor Andrea!

ROSELLE. Poor signior Di Gobble-o!

Scene II.

O have you known, fond youth, as I
What 'tis to climb the mountains high,
With a bright form of beauty o'er you,
Lighting the airy path before you?
To see how wastefully the wind
Sweeps round and o'er, yet still unkind,
Nought but the fine small ankle shows
For all it flutters, flaps, and blows;
Clasping, indeed, the slender knee
As smooth as chisell'd drapery,
And with its plastic breath pretending
To shape a Phidian beauty bending
Against its strength—yet leaving you
As wise as if it never blew;
For still the envious kirtle dances
Just in the high-road of your glances!

Something like this sweet agony
Haps to my hero, I can see;
The sylvan girl before him glides
Like Oread up the mountain-sides;
No finer form on Attic shore
Bold-eyed Apelles scann'd of yore,
Nor peeping gods, when Jove's free daughter
Lavish'd her white limbs on the water

With its loved burden proudly swelling,
 While Dorian caves for joy were knelling,
 Triumphant tales of beauty telling.
 But our young goddess doth exceed
 This reveller on the ocean-bed ;
 For, of a loveliness as rare,
 She is as pure as she is fair :
 Her snowy mountain-garb reveals
 The charms alone no garb conceals,
 Which, spite of that ensphering shroud,
 Burst forth like moonbeams through a cloud.

Silent, the rapt idolater
 Of this fair wood-nymph follows her ;
 Yet distant, too, whiche'er it be
 Revering her divinity,
 Or that, perdue, his gleaming eye
 May some neglectful beauty spy ;
 Yet still to doubt and wonder given
 At so much beauty under Heaven.

She turns, and speaks !—Around her mouth
 Breaks a slow smile : as when the South
 Opens thy lips, O ruby rose !
 And thy look brightens as it blows.

SYLVIA. I am too light of foot, I fear, for you.

ROMANZO. Are you of earth? I see the bended grass
 Fillip you off its shoulders like the dew
 At glistening up-suntide. You press the herb
 As tenderly as mist. Sure you have coursed
 With Naiads after pearls on the quick stream,
 That you can fleet so deftly : or has Zephyr
 Lent you his winged slippers?

SYLVIA. O no ! no !

My sole companions until now have been
 The wild bird and gazelle : haunting with them
 Has made me near as buoyant. Pardon me !
 Sooth I forgot myself with our sweet talk,
 And when I should be courteous, and restrain
 My wonted pace, the music that I hear
 Makes me dance onward like the thistledown
 Timing its gait to the wind's eloquence.
 But you are all to blame !

ROMANZO. Oh, I could follow you
 To the world's bound ! o'er unsupporting seas

And snows infirm as light ! Methinks I could
Fleet across bottomless gulfs on the thick air,
And scale the cliffs that nought but sunbeams climb,
Borne up by aspiration towards your beauty.

I have oft dream'd

Of gliding by long leaps o'er the green ground
In breathless ecstasy : through plushy lanes,
Tree-sided ; and down sloping esplanades
Battening in sunlight ; along valleys dim,
High-terraced rivers, and wild meadow-lands,
Bending my easy way : by will alone,
And inward heaving, rais'd, I seem to flee,
With pleasant dread of touching the near grass
That brushes at my feet. But this fine dream
Is now as dull as life ! Yon angel sun
Swims up the welkin not with half the joy,
The silent joy in smoothness, that I feel
Soaring up this hill-side so green with you.

SYLVIA. Why do I feel such pain to hear you speak ?
Your gentle voice thrills in my happy bosom
Like waters trembling in their fountain-cell
At hearing the groved nightingale Speak on.

ROMANZO. Dear Sylvia—

SYLVIA. I did never think my name
So beautiful before ! Have other men
Voices as soft as yours ?

ROMANZO. The mountain air
Sweetens its tone.

SYLVIA. O no ! it was the same
Down in the vale, when you told in mine ear
Things that I understood not, though I wish'd.
Wilt say them o'er again ?

ROMANZO. Not now ; I dare not !
When you look back upon me with that brow
So golden ; all with curled sunbeams hung ;
Brightening above me into that sweet smile
Angelical,—I almost think you come
From Heaven to lead me thither. That light garb
Floating behind you seems to part in wings,
And your ethereal form glides up the steep
As smooth and noiseless as it rose indeed
Spontaneous to its own cherubic sphere.
I could even kneel to thee !

SYLVIA.

Nay, sit you down

Upon this mossy bank o'er-violeted,
 And we will gaze upon the vales below :
 And we will spend an hour of rapturous talk—
 And gaze—and talk—and read each other's eyes,
 Blissful as birds : or pluck wild flowers, and sing
 To the hoarse-cadent waterfalls : or hymn
 A lovely story out, and stop and listen
 While the wind bears to Echo the faint tale,
 That woos its sweet way back to us again.

ROMANZO. Oh, I am wrapt in glory !—Seem we not
 Like two young Spirits stole from Heaven to view
 This green creation ; who with looks of praise
 Sit murmuring on the early mountain-tops
 In close ambrosial converse ?—O look round !
 Pleasure lies floating o'er the scenes beneath
 Dissolved in the warm air ; and gorgeous Noon
 O'er the ripe fields her yellow veil doth spread
 So thick, mine eyes scarce pierce it.

SYLVIA. Turn them here
 And drink fresh wonder. Yon's my favourite haunt :
 A winding elm-walk, by a silver stream
 Ambling free-footed down the mountain's side,
 Weetless of whither : till it falls at last,
 With gentle wail that it must sleep so soon,
 Over the rocky shelve into the lake,
 The glassy-bosom'd lake, so deep and clear.

ROMANZO. Methinks the boughs that keep it dark and
 cool,
 Hang o'er the jetty marge in a fond dream :
 Even their whispering speaks of sleepiness.

SYLVIA. Look at the feeding swan beneath the willows :
 How pure her white neck gleams against their green
 As she sits nesting on the waters !

ROMANZO. Beautiful !
 She is the lady of the reed-girt Isles !
 See ! how she swells her navigable wings
 And coasts her sedgy empire keenly round !
 She looks a bird of snow dropt from the clouds
 To queen it o'er the minnows !

SYLVIA. Doth she not ?
 Side-looking, slow, disdainful one !

ROMANZO. The bright,
 The pearly creature !—Lone and calm she rides,
 Like Dian on the wave when night is clear,

And the sleek west-wind smooths the billows down
 Into forgetfulness, that she may see
 How fast her silver gondola can boom
 Sheer on the level deep.

SYLVIA. Behold yon rock
 Down which a torrent shines afar : the noise
 Is loud, yet we can't hear it.

ROMANZO. Partial Heavens !
 O what a splendid deluge thou pour'st down
 From out thy glorious flood-gate, on this vale !
 Thickets, and knolls, slopes, lawns, and bosomy dells,
 Scarce show their green for gold. Yet, it is strange !
 There is a melancholy in sun-bright fields
 Deeper to me than gloom ; I am ne'er so sad
 As when I sit amid bright scenes alone.

SYLVIA. Perchance your fortunes are not of that hue,
 And then it seems to mock them.—Come, your eyes
 Are full of meditation's tears. Come on !
 I have a garland still to bind for you :
 Come ! to the myrtle grove.

ROMANZO. The myrtle grove !

SYLVIA. I'll teach you too how it behoves you walk
 This valley. Come !

ROMANZO. Sweet ! to the myrtle grove !

[*Exeunt.*]

Scene III.

Down the bourn-side and up the dale
 Observe a dim line across the Vale,
 By sad and sun-green grasses made
 A boundary of light and shade :
 This is the running landmark drawn
 Athwart the deep prospective lawn,
 Sharing the Valley's length between
 The Fiend-King and the Fairy-Queen.

Enter GRUMIEL and MOMIEL.

MOMIEL. Proceed, master !—proceed, thou infallible
vade mecum !

GRUMIEL. Goad me not, fleeing pest ! with thy long
 nails,

Else I will tear the skin from off thy back,
 In straps ; or gouge thine eyes out.

MOMIEL. But, my lord,
We shall not catch our prey else.

GRUMIEL. Fogs on him !
And him that sent us ! and thee too, thou zany !
Come on, and thou shalt see there is no means
To pass without our limbo.

MOMIEL. So ! his rush
Is out, I think !

GRUMIEL. Feel here ; a sightless plane
Of glass stands like a crystal wall, as high
As bridgy Heav'n : 'tis thinner than blown soap,
Yet strong as adamant to smoky natures
Like thine and mine : this is the jealous pale
And limit of our realm. We cannot pierce it
Without a spell, and that would rouse Morgana.
Come hither ; strive to punch thy finger through,
Or break thy foot against it.

MOMIEL. No, my lord,
I'll use a tougher mallet—give me leave—

GRUMIEL. What wouldst thou do ?

MOMIEL. Why, take thee leg and arm,
And bounce thee 'gainst it like a battering-ram,
Till skull or wall should crack : better if both.

GRUMIEL. Thou that canst grin so like a wolf, howl
too ! [Strikes him.

MOMIEL. I'll get thee plagued for this : I'll be revenged !

GRUMIEL. We must slouch home.

MOMIEL. Ay, and be scorch'd to fritters !
That is your wisdom !—No ; hear my device :
Let us creep serpent-wise along the ground,
Close by the wall, and trap the younker ranging.

GRUMIEL. Poh ! thou'rt a counsellor indeed ? How
trap him ?

How should we lure him o'er ? first tell me that.

MOMIEL. I have a stratagem. The heat is fierce.
And he will rage with thirst. Do thou stand here,
With a deep bowl of Lethe in thy fist,
A little from the wall : thou hast a face,
A good bronze face, and Ethiop limbs to boot,
So may'st assume the statue. If he thrust
A nostril through the wall, the deadly fume
Will cloud his brain, and through all lets he'll come,
Like a blind horse, to drink. Stand till he tries
To bathe his lip in the fresh cup thou hold'st

And then we'll seize upon him.

GRUMIEL. Good ! I see it.
Vanish thou when he comes. I will stand fast
As the unquarried rock ; and so present him
This maple bowl, crown'd with such juicy weeds
And dropping such pure blobs, that he will drink
Though angels bid him hold.

MOMIEL. Lie close ! lie close ! [*Exeunt.*]

Enter NEPHON behind.

NEPHON. Ho ! ho ! I thought that I should catch ye ;
Snakes i' the grass, I'll over-match ye.
There comes an instrument that shall
Work our advantage and your bale—
Hist ! hist ! Floretta !

Enter FLORETTA.

FLORETTA. Ay !—like you
I have been eavesdropping too.
Now I must like wind away
To my virgin care,
And entice her if I may,
From this demon snare.
Eve shall hang the clouds with scarlet
Ere I rest me ! [*Vanishes.*]

NEPHON. Here's the varlet !—
In the skylark's simple bed,
Nephon, hide thy artful head.

Enter ANDREA.

ANDREA. I have heard of Pacolet and his horse, that
could fly from Constantinople to Rome by the turning of a
peg in his neck, and without the turning of a hair on his
body : for indeed he had none ; being made, I think, of
good dry oak, if it were not rather Spanish mahogany.
But, for the most part, I have always set down such matters
as nothing better than *moral tales* ; with no more truth in
them than is to be found at the bottom of a well ; and of
use only to give youth a relish for history and learning.
Now do I see the vanity of this age in pretending to cry
down such things. What ! have not I been soaring ? have
not I been taking down a few cobwebs from the "hazy
canopy," as we say in rhyme ? have not I cut "the starry
firmament" hither, on a four-legged stool ? How many

minutes is it since I was cheek by cheek with a couple of frolicsome damsels, or rather a still more kiss-provoking double-tankard?—and now—O sorrowful change!—I am only beside myself, in this hideously beautiful valley! O Master! Master! would I might see the fringe of thy skirt, or pick up one of thy stray belts!—it would do to hang myself, if I had no other consolation!

[An embroidered suit falls in different places about him.]

So-ho, there!—Does it snow by the yard here? and in summer too?—Cloaks! doublets! indescribables!—What! are the clouds woollen-manufactories! Is Heaven any place for a tailor? could he soar thither on his goose?—O fine!—If the fig-trees in this place grow leaves equal to these, I have found out the site of Adam's paradise. They shall not long be in want of a wearer. 'Slife! they fit me like a new skin. Now if I should meet Signior Romanzo! No matter; I would not bend a hair from my altitude: I shall be as good a gentleman as he in my fourth generation. O grand!—Now could I lead a troop of horse!—O magnificent Andrea!—Wert thou ever a plebeian?—But, alas! of what use is all this splendour when there is no one but myself to admire it?

NEPHON. Signior Andrea!

ANDREA. Ahoy!—who squeaks?

NEPHON. Signior Andrea della Pimpinella!

ANDREA. Santa Maria! am I pinching the tail of a grass-mouse?—Where did it get my name, though?

NEPHON. Signior Andrea della Pimpinella di Ribobolo!

ANDREA. Andrea della Pimpinella di Ribobolo!—he has learnt it all as pat as my godfather!—only that he sings it a little through his nose. Where is this mighty small-spoken gentleman?—Hilloa, Signior Nobody! at what point of the compass must I look, to be mannerly?

NEPHON. Consult your shoe-buckles.

ANDREA. O pupil of mine eyes! what do I behold?—Art thou Gorgoglio, the son of the giant Gorbellone? or only a simple Patagonian from the South Pole? What heathen ogress gave such an enormity birth? Did Nature cut thee out of a mountain?—What art thou?

NEPHON. Look at my mustaches!

ANDREA. Ay, I might have known thee for an hussar by the ferocity of thy voice, and the stoutness of thy figure: thou art all over tags and bobs too, like an itinerant haber-

dasher. What is thy name?—Grimbalduno, or Hurlloth-rumbo?

NEPHON. I shall not be loth to declare it upon any gentlemanly occasion.

ANDREA. Lud-a-mercy! I did not mean to send your reverence a challenge! The very wind of your weapon would make flitches of me: slice me from nape to hip, like two moieties of a pig hung up i' the shambles. No! no! I have more wit than to have my skull laid open like a boiled rabbit's, or to die the divisible death of a walnut!

NEPHON. Will you walk then,—I mean, saunter?

ANDREA. So as your reverence has no bloodthirsty intention: I am no dare-devil to encounter such a Goliath. But take care lest my foot happen to light on your reverence; it might squeeze your reverence into the capacity of a dollar: and by'r lady! I cannot undertake to distinguish your reverence while dame Earth keeps her beard unshorn. If I should step into a two-inch tuft, it's odds but I commit manslaughter. Could not your reverence manage to take my heel by the elbow? We might then trot on brotherly together.

NEPHON. Take care of thyself, Master Andrea: there are man-traps hereabout. Leave me to my own discretion.

ANDREA. Agreed, your reverence: only remember that if I shall chance, in raising my foot, to kick your worship to Grand Cairo, I shall not be bound to measure swords with your reverence for the insult.

NEPHON. Agreed! agreed! [*Exeunt.*]

Scene changes to another part of the woodland.

Enter ROMANZO AND SYLVIA.

SYLVIA. No farther, dear companion!—where yon stream Tinkles amid the bushes down the vale,
The ground becomes unholy.

ROMANZO. O sweet Sylvia!
I long to be thy champion, thy true knight!—
Thy conquering smile upon me, with this sword
I'll undertake to blaze destruction
Through every demon cave——

SYLVIA. Not for the world!
Thou must not be so venturous!

ROMANZO. I would do
Some deed of high devotion, as of old,

Renowned Youths did for their lady-loves.
 Prithée, assent !—with Heaven's good aid and thine,
 Yon half o' the vale, now sable-green, and drear,
 Shall bloom beneath thy fearless step like this ;
 And thou shalt range it, as the palmy hind
 Her forest walks unscared.

SYLVIA. Do it, and make me
 Fall from my happy state !—Wilt have me weep ?

ROMANZO. Nay, kill me with a frown—if thou canst
 frown,

Ah ! strive not !—on thy candid brow a star
 Shines cloudlessly, and oh, more constant bright
 Than e'en the marble tutoress of a cave
 Holds 'tween her heavy eyelids, when the moon
 Has stolen upon her beauty. 'Tis in vain !
 Thy lips are grave—no more ! Come, thou must smile !

SYLVIA. Then do not pain my heart by talking thus
 Of wild attempts : I'm satisfied with thee,
 And do not wish thee greater ; nor a space
 More wide for our sweet rambles. Let me show thee
 Carefully all the fatal bounds, that when
 Thou walk'st, perchance, alone, thou may'st avoid them.
 Then will we to the bower.

Enter FLORETTA.

ROMANZO. What is here ?
 Sylvia !—see ! see !

SYLVIA. Peace ! 'tis a fairy !
 One of the petty angels of this realm ;
 We must be courteous to the gentle thing,
 Or 'twill not hum its song. Listen ! Oh, listen !

ROMANZO. Oh, Heavens ! I almost weep and laugh at
 once

To hear its silver words ; and see it tipping
 Every fair-crested daughter of the field
 With puny hand.—What ! doth it steal their leaves ?

SYLVIA. Sweet friend, keep silence !

FLORETTA. I do love the meadow-beauties,
 And perform them tender duties,
 So the fair ones let me use 'em
 For my brow, and for my bosom.
 Follow ! follow ! follow me !
 And I'll choose a brooch for thee !

Here be pansies just a-blowing ;
 Here be lords-and-ladies glowing ;
 What a crowd of maiden-blushes
 Court a kiss on yonder bushes !
 Follow ! follow ! follow me !
 And I'll get a kiss for thee !

Down the slopy hillocks, sweetest
 Grows the blue pervinké, meetest
 For a garland ; should the wreather
 Cowslip choose, she may have either !
 Follow ! follow ! follow me !
 And I'll show them both to thee !
 [*Exit, followed by ROMANZO and SYLVIA.*]

Enter GRUMIEL and MOMIEL.

GRUMIEL. Pugh ! I smell villainous mortality !—Our prey is near.

MOMIEL. Is this he striding towards us in seven-leagued shoes, with a whole peacock's tail in his bonnet ?

GRUMIEL. Ay ; doth he not strut most wrathfully, like a lobster-nosed alderman, or a new-made lord o' the bed-chamber ? A's a gallant fellow ! It must be he !

MOMIEL. Doubtless it must : he comes of a coach-keeping family, at least ; for the smirk of my lady's footman shines out in his visage : I warrant you now, simple as he walks there, he can trace his pedigree to Adam !

GRUMIEL. Ay, and to popes and emperors ; he is scarlet even to the tip of his nostril. Tell me that I have not the eyes of discovery again, sirrah !

MOMIEL. Faith, yes, to detect the pulp of a melon under the coat of a pumpkin. Are the seven wise souls of Greece clubbed in thy politic person ?—[*Aside.*] There is nothing of the Narcissus about this swaggerer ; a bulrush bred out o' the mire : he hath not the look of a flower-gentle. Some ass in the hide of a zebra : some highway-man, that hath changed cloaks with a cardinal. But 'twill do ! this sot of a spaniel here will get lugged for his mistake ; setting a scarecrow instead of a woodcock. I'll humour it !

GRUMIEL. Slink off, thou gibbering ape !—I'll stiffen into metal, with the cup.

MOMIEL. Ay, thou'lt brazen it out, never fear thee, like a saint upon a vintner's sign-post.—Here he comes, walking

as wide and crop-swollen as a magpie in red spatterdashes.
—How naturally that brother of mine looks through glass eyes at nothing !

Enter ANDREA ; NEPHON behind.

ANDREA. Paugh ! the sun, I think, is very indecorously hot ; nothing above lukewarm is fashionable : therefore Apollo is less of a gentleman than his brother Phebe, as we lassically desecrate the night's bright lunatic. 'Slidikins ! I melt like a waxen image in the bodice of a fat landlady. —Oh, for another pull at "our mother's flasket of cordial" ! —What ho ! Signior Grasshopper !—Could'st thou pilot me to some well or stream ? I'll set thee on the back of a minnow for it, if thou lik'st such a cockhorse.—The *homunculus* had almost slipped out of my remembrance during the last minute. 'Slife ! 'tis vanished out of my sight also !—Oh lamentable ! Ox that I am, I have trodden his little frogship into a mummy ! his blood is upon my toe !—This comes of walking with greatness ; this comes of conversing with those that are above thee ; thou wilt be crushed as a grain of wheat by a millstone ! Phial of Saint Januarius ! what have we here ? A noddling mandarin-cup-bearer ! a Hottentot Granny-maid !—if it be not rather a newly-cast chandelier walked abroad from the foundery ! Is it the bottom of a brewer's vat he stretches forth so courteously ? —Oh, now I have it ! 'tis a charity cup for the wayfarer, posted here by some benevolent monks in the neighbourhood. I'll be bound for it though, the hospitable gentlemen have not squeezed the best o' their vintage into it. Nothing, as I live ! more precious than water, and that none of the most fragrant. Waugh ! I hope the spring was not poisoned ; nevertheless my tongue is drier than a camel's hoof, and I must soak it a little, if 'twere only to prevent it growing cloven. So, *Monsieur* Dumb-waiter, by your leave—

GRUMIEL. [*seizing him*]. Dog ! I have thee !

MOMIEL. Collar him ! collar him ! with thy brassy talons !

ANDREA. I am betrayed, like an innocent !—O thou treacherous mite ! O thou iniquitous atom ! O thou vile thumb of a man ! would that I never—

MOMIEL. Chuck him under the chin for his 'brave speech-making : grip him fast by his thump-cushion arm, lest he overdo the action.

GRUMIEL. Drag him along, the field-preacher !

MOMIEL. Ay, to court with him ! he shall preach before his majesty.

ANDREA. Beseech ye, noble Abyssinians—

GRUMIEL. Shall I cork thee with this mallet ?

MOMIEL. Nay, if he will not, let us put a ring in his nose, and haul him along like a bull for the baiting. Nudge him on the other side, with the crank of thy elbow, and see how merrily he'll amble.

ANDREA. O miserable son of a weaver ! O unfortunate poet ! O intolerably unlucky, and never-enough-to-be-pitied-for-thy-innumerable-and-inexpressible-woes-and-unheard-of-misventures, Andrea della Pimpinella di Ribobolo.

MOMIEL. Ay, ay, that is your *alias* ; and like every other knave that would conceal himself, you have as many titles as a Spanish grandee ; but it sh'an't serve at this turning : no, no, Signior *Alias* !

GRUMIEL. Whirl him along, thou accursed stonechatter ! thou soul of a spinster !

ANDREA. I am getting addled as a nest-egg. Am I an animal or a Mameluke ?

[*Exeunt the fiends, dragging ANDREA.*]

Scene IV.

The dreary halls of the enchanter
 Lengthen in antre after antre :
 Between the yawning jambs of which
 Strong-ribbed portcullises do stretch.
 Enormous Powers, on either hand,
 Some of the old Titanian band,
 With misty eyes and downcast looks
 Stand dozing in their hollow nooks, .
 Club-shapen oaks beneath their arms
 To guard the House of Ill from harms :
 The dun lords of the feline race
 From side to side pass and repass ;
 And brinded forms with cruel eyes
 Glistening at one another's cries,
 Scourge their own sides for ire ; a brood
 Kept fierce for war by lack of food
 And red repast of luscious blood.

Ten griffins torturing round their stings,
Coil their mail'd lengths in crackling rings,
That ever as their nostrils blow
Sulphury flames, illumined grow,
As if their steely faces shone
With passions, instant come and gone.

See'st thou a funeral canopy
Hang in the black air dismally
Its flaggy curtains?—there doth moan
In easeless sleep the Evil-One :
And there, his painful cockatrice
Lulls him with close incessant hiss,
If lull he may ; for Terror still
Keeps him awake against his will.

Upstarts the regal mockery !—now
Flashes the blue spite of his brow,
And now he thrills the batty walls
Of his dull palace, as he calls.

Enter FIENDS.

ARARACH. No word?—no sign?—no messenger?

Fiends. None, lord !

ARARACH. O ye shall freeze, ye slugs ! in lakes of ice
For this !—ye shall ! What ! none ?—For ages, ay,
Till roaring conflagration seize the world,
Ye shall stand oozing blood from either eye,
With bitter pain !—

Fiends. Hark ! the resounding floors !
Thunders the echoing porch, and clang the barry doors !

Enter GRUMIEL and MOMIEL, with ANDREA prisoner.

ARARACH. What's he? Yon staring fool ! Speak, ye
torpedos !
Where have ye slept your time ?

GRUMIEL. Master, we bring
Thy victim-rival, the spruce lord—

ARARACH. That charlatan ?—
Ho !—bear these dormice instant to the torture !
Let them be lashed to strips inch-broad ! let both
Trudge blistering o'er a fiery-sanded plain,
While ye on wing do scourge them !

GRUMIEL. Howl ! howl ! howl !

MOMIEL. Ha ! ha !—I care not what I suffer, while

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I see him get the lashes !—Ha ! ha ! ha !
 Thou'lt find a springy Oasis in the desert,
 Eh, thou discoverer ? or a North Pole
 To cool thy feet ?

GRUMIEL. I'll grind thy head for this,
 If ever we get free !

[Exeunt GRUMIEL and MOMIEL with the torturers.]

ARARACH. Who art thou, idiot ?

ANDREA. I know no more of my parents, your worship,
 than a foundling tied to a knocker. When I was alive, if I
 can collect my scattered faculties, I might, please your wor-
 ship, have been (without pride be it spoken !) the only hope
 of a tailor : but indeed I have not the boldness to maintain
 it ; for within these few minutes, I have, with pure fear and
 exaggeration, forgotten all my geography.—Oh, will these
 teeth wear themselves round, like a parcel of jackstones ?—
 Shall I ever crack a filberd again ?—Chatter ! chatter !
 chatter !

ARARACH. What have they brought me here ? A half-
 brain'd loon !

A mimmering driveller !—Shove him without !
 He's not worth torments. Stay : thou shalt not go
 Without our mark upon thee.—Hence, stupidity !

[Striking him with his wand.]

Trot on a cloven heel away, and satyr-like,
 As Nature should have made thee !—Stretch his ears
 Into a Panic size !—Go ! scare the wilds,
 Thou bungle of a man !—Hoot him away !

ANDREA. I do most verdantly beseech our Lady
 To grant your worship long life and propriety !

[Exit running.]

ARARACH. I'll send these tortured slaves trooping again
 Upon mine errand : 'twas that yellow fiend
 Perplexed his brother. But I'll promise him
 Pains that will make his spirit sob to hear them,
 If he do so again. I have no choice ;
 They are my best of servants. Call those fiends !

The scene closes.

ACT III.

Scene I.

THE Myrtle Grove :—O gentle Power !
 Psyche's aye-blooming bachelor !
 Thou in whose curls fell strength abides,
 Whose baby hand the lion guides,
 I think, with all thy other claims,
 Thou'st a sweet choice in very names !
 Oft have I dwelt upon thine own ;
 LOVE !—'tis a most Æolian tone !
 So soft, the lips will scarcely meet,
 Almost afraid to fashion it ;
 And mark our deepest votaries,—they
 Sigh it most silently away !
 Was never seen an artless Maid
 But smiled to say, or hear it said,
 Ev'n though her heart can scarcely tell,
 What's in the sound she loves so well :
 Was never seen a generous Youth
 But vow'd—'twas a sweet word in sooth !
 A simple syllable, 'tis true,
 Yet born in Heaven like balm and dew ;
 In Heaven alone it could have birth,
 No child of miserable Earth !
 It dropt from the harmonic spheres,
 A manna-sound to starving ears.
 Name we Love's flowers : The *Rose* ! the *Rose* !
 Sounds it not queenly as it blows ?
 And *Lily* !—this is even yet
 More inly fine and delicate !—
 Thy murmuring bosom-bird, the *Dove*,
 Chimes not its name to thine, O Love ?
 And could the wit of wisest man
 Find a much statelier name than *Swan* ?—
 How many an eye beams slyly coy ;
 How many a heart trembles with joy ;
 How many a cheek doth sudden glow ;
 How many a bosom heaves its snow ;

How many a lip, raised in delight,
 Just shows the pearl, a line of white ;
 How many a sigh is breathed, when none
 May hear the heart's confession ;
 How many a throb Hyblœan Love !
 Wakes at these words—*the Myrtle Grove* ?
 Ay, the pale, wedded, widow'd dame,
 Pensive recalls the long-lost name ;
 A hectic,—one faint wave,—no more !—
 Passes her marble beauty o'er ;
 She smooths the braid upon her brow,
 Remembering—Ah ! what reck's it now ?
 Within the grove a bower you see
 Of this same lover-loving tree ;
 Veil'd in its dim recess, and warm,
 A Youth still gazes on a form
 That stands a-tiptoe, plucking there
 Boughs, and green leaves, and blossoms fair :
 Wreathing them round her veined wrist,
 By none but such entwiner kist,
 Our SYLVIA binds, with many a gem
 And costly spray, her diadem.

SYLVIA [*Singing as she binds*].

Sweet the noise of waters falling,
 And of bees among the flowers,
 Wild-birds their companions calling,
 Summer winds, and summer showers !

This lily ! I must put her next the rose ;
 They always go together.

ROMANZO [*Aside*].

Even in rhyme !

SYLVIA.

Say, why does that young rose redden ?
 And why is that lily so pale ?
 O—she is a new-married maiden,
 And she—a maid left to wail !

How “left” ?—did her lover die ?—It is a song
 I've heard my mother sing.—O me ! how soon
 This tall Sweet-William faded !—Ay ! 'tis the way !

The streams that wind amid the hills,
 And lost in pleasure slowly roam,
 While their deep joy the valley fills,—
 Ev'n these will leave their mountain-home :
 So may it, love ! with others be,
 But I will never wend from thee !

The leaf forsakes the parent spray,
 The blossom quits the stem as fast,
 The rose-enamoured bird will stray,
 And leave his eglantine at last ;
 So may it, love ! with others be,
 But I will never wend from thee !

Come ! it is done. I never weft before
 So beautiful a chaplet.

ROMANZO. It might wreathe
 A brow most godlike !

SYLVIA. Ay, and shall do so !
 Else I would strew the weeds under my feet,
 And break mine heart with weeping !

I've pluck'd the wild woodbine, and lilac so pale,
 And the sweetest young cowslips that grew in the dale,
 The bud from the flower, and the leaf from the tree,
 To bind a rich garland, young Shepherd ! for thee.

O look how the rose blushes deeper with pride,
 And how pretty forget-me-not peeps by its side ;
 How the high-crested pink in brave plumage doth fall,
 And look how the lily looks sweeter than all !

My beautiful myrtle !—I think thou dost know
 Upon whom this rich garland I mean to bestow ;
 For thou seem'st with a voice full of fragrance to sigh—
 "Should I wreath that young Shepherd, how happy were I !"

Come, bend me thy brow, gentle youth ! and I'll twine
 Round thy temples so pure this rich garland of mine ;
 O thou look'st such a prince !—from this day, from this hour,
 I will call thee nought else but the Lord of my Bower !

ROMANZO. Would I were so, indeed !—Look ! I have
 knelt
 That I may feel thy soft hands in my hair,

Like winds in autumn leaves. Around thy form
I'll close my suppliant arms, and like a shrine,
Press it to smile on my devotedness !

AGATHA. [*Behind*] 'Tis as I feared ! O these soft
myrtle bowers !

SYLVIA. Now, it is trim as may be. I would keep
Thee ever kneeling thus ; and still would find
Some flower awry to settle : but yon cushat
'Gins her lone widow-note at evening hour ;
That is my warning home !

AGATHA. Still ! still my daughter !

SYLVIA.

Amid the valleys far away,
A mother-bird sits on a tree,
And weeps unto her long-astray—
“ O come my little bird to me ! ”

So “ long-astray ”

Must now away

Unto its parent tree !

ROMANZO. As light the day,

Or love the May,

Sweet !—I will follow thee !

AGATHA. They are both innocent : Love's taper burns
Brightest in purest bosoms.—Yet I'll task him ;
It is a mother's right.—So ! I have met ye !
What a wild pair of ramblers ye have been !—
The whole, whole morn away !

ROMANZO. Nay, we were going
Straight to the cottage ; and the birds' way too,—
The shortest we could see.

AGATHA. Let go my neck, [*To SYLVIA.*]
Thou fondler !—murmuring about my lips
With thy bee kisses. What should I care for thee,
A bird that leav'st thy summer-cage, whene'er
The wicket opens ?

SYLVIA. Aye, but comes again
To feed upon its mistress' hand, and hide
Its softness in her bosom.

AGATHA. There's no chiding thee !
Hie home ; my limbs are weary. It is time
Our guest should taste refreshment : to prepare it
Has been my morning's work, while you were roaming.
Go : all is spread ; but still, I think, it wants
Your garnishing : go, deck it with fresh flowers,

As you are wont when we sit all alone.

SYLVIA. Then do not ye stay long ! I'll have it deckt
Ere ye could pluck the blossoms. *[Exit.]*

AGATHA. Sir, your crown
Becomes you bravely !

ROMANZO. O it has taken all
Its beauty from the wreather !—her sweet touch
Has lent it a new perfume, and a lustre
It never had before !—Now, she is gone,
I will be king no longer. *[Takes off his crown.]*

AGATHA. O, sir ! sir !
If you, who are a stranger, can speak thus,
How should another, who has seen this flower
Bud, bloom, and hallow its wild parent-home
With smiles no garden knows !—Forgive me, Youth,
That I speak thus of her : forgive me, too,
This foolish, beating, mother's heart of mine,
That fain would question him who has reveal'd
So much, and yet no more.

ROMANZO. I have no secret !
None !—What you ask, I'll answer.—Or, perchance,
You'll hear my life's short story ? I am a bachelor
The lord of some few acres ; whom the love
Of scenes by Nature's wandering pencil drawn,
Has led among these solitudes : with this,
My death, were I to die as I am speaking,
Were all, I ween, that friend or foe could grave
Justly upon my tomb.

AGATHA. 'Tis frankly spoken,
And I should mourn to think that Youth had grown
So cunning in the world since I have left it,
To wear a brow so clear as yours, the while
One spot was on the heart.

ROMANZO. I do confess,
If you would have more witness of my truth
I scarce could give it : being come so far
From Padua, where I studied, and am known,
With but one servant. He, poor knave, I lost
In the deep gorges of these purple hills
But yesterday. If we may chance on him,
He will confirm the story you have heard,
And then you must believe.

AGATHA. I do already :
But still—We mothers !—O, we are such cowards !

ROMANZO. Put me to trial : I'll submit myself
To a whole year's probation : I will do
Any thing you can ask, if so I may
Win my sweet mistress.—

AGATHA. Well—well—well

Re-enter SYLVIA in terror.

My child !

What ails my love ? my daughter ?

SYLVIA. Oh ! I have seen

So wild and strange a creature !

ROMANZO. What ! a wolf ?

SYLVIA. No, some uncouth resemblance of a man,
But not like thee. As I approach'd the cottage,
From a green nook out-started this rough thing,
And brush'd me swiftly by. I could not move,
Or cry, with sudden terror ; but stood there
Fixt like a tree, how long I do not know,
Till sense return'd, and scarcely so much strength
As bore me hither.

ROMANZO. Let it be man or beast
I'll scourge it from this vale !

[Tears down a branch, and exit.

SYLVIA. O ye kind powers !

Save him, Morgana ! save him !

[Exit after ROMANZO.

AGATHA. Sylvia !—rash girl !—

[Exit after her.

*The Scene changes to the front of the Cottage, where a table
is laid with refreshments.*

Enter ANDREA.

ANDREA. *Tin ! sin ! whee ! ree !*—Whether I have
been sun-stricken or no, I cannot tell ; but my head sings,
like a boiling kettle. I think—and yet I think I don't
think. I remember—and still, I forget what I remember.
Now would I give a natural philosopher, Prato the Grig, or
Julia Scissars of Rome, a very handsome douser if he
would absolve me whether my feet stand under me, or
I stand under my feet.—Stay : what was I at the time
of the Deluge ?—Oh ! a mandrake, swimming about merrily,
and was drowned like the Dutch-skipper with my hands in
my breeches-pockets. After that I had the convoy of a
whole fleet of sea-calves, with which we peopled the famous

Island of Bulls. I remember it as well as my breakfast to-morrow : we multified prodigiously there, and should have been lords of the creation, only that we had some cannibal qualities about us ; great beef-eaters ! fast-hating fellows !—Hilloah ! what's here to be seen ? By the mass here is as soft a carpet of clover as ever I cooled my heels on ; good ! set that down, commentator ! *item* : “ an acre of green baize for a sky-coloured parlour.” Here, too, is a—Bless me ! I totally forget the name for a house—good ! no matter ; call it a pigeon-box. Finally and firstly of all, I see trenchers to be quaffed, and bowls to be muncht : so will proceed no further in the decalogue, but content myself with this humble shoulder of mutton.

[Sits down and helps himself to fruit.]

Admirable !—tastes a little racy or so ; it must have had the run of a fruitery. *[Drinking off a bowl of milk.]* Nothing like your creaming Champagne, after all !—Comfort thyself, poor GANDREA ! it is now exactly the best part of a fortnight since thou didst swallow a single granary of nutriment. Thou canst not always, man ! live upon air, like a camel-leopard.—Sir, you are welcome to Tartary !

Enter ROMANZO. SYLVIA and AGATHA following.

ROMANZO. Who—what art thou that dar'st—By all that's strange,

This is my servant, Andrea ! but so alter'd
I scarce could know him. Sirrah ! where have you been,
That you are thus transform'd ?

ANDREA. Indeed I have been spending an hour or two with my old friend, clerk of the kitchen to Ancient Nicolas ; so I hope am good company for any one of the cloth, under a Jesuit or Holy Inquisitor.

SYLVIA. It talks strange reason !

AGATHA.

Servant !—O we are lost !

What may the master be, if such the man ?

Pray Heaven he be no demon in disguise ?

ROMANZO. Hast thou left off thy reverence with thy shape ?

Why dost thou not rise up and bow to me ? Who am I, knave ?

ANDREA. You ?—The man from the moon, I think, by your crazy appearance. What a magnifico you are ! Where's your fur-cloak and your poodle ?—You, indeed !—Orson might have been your great-aunt by the mother's-side, for

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all I know of the matter.—Do the people in this quarter dangle such canes at the wrist as that you are switching your boots with?—Oh! lack-a-day! lack-a-daisy! now I remember you!—Let me hear you grumble.

ROMANZO. Well! art thou still a stranger to this frown?

ANDREA. Verily I do entertain some oblivious recollection that I may have seen such a frizziognomy before: Or is it one from a dream of ugly faces?—Stop: Odso, now I have it! You are the bravo that robbed my unfortunate master, threw him into a mill-dam hard by, and made me hold my nostril over a cauldron of deadly night-shade, till I am grown as dizzy as a beetle. The same! I'll swear it before this Madonna herself!—And these are his very garments, of which, with sacratitious hands, you have stripped and deluded his body. O thief! burglarer! fortune-hunter! kidnapper!

AGATHA. What do I hear?

SYLVIA.

There is no truth in him:

Believe not that rude thing!

ANDREA. I'll take it on my life he is a capital fellow!—a murderer! a committer of *fo-paws*, and every other crime that deserves a halter!—He cannot deny it!

ROMANZO. Slave! liar! devil!

My rage unnerves me!

ANDREA. Will you abscond?—or must I have you laid by the heels for a common tax-gatherer?

ROMANZO. Down to the dust, to which I'll crumble thee?

ANDREA. O, fool! fool! fool!—you have demolished at one blow a feast that might have tempted St. Anthony himself!—That pitcher will never recover the thwack you have given it, if it lived to the age of Methusalem!—You have injured, O lamentable! the rotundity of that cheese beyond redemption; spoiled the shape of that pie for ever and long after!—Oons! he will make a whipt-syllabub of me if I stay any longer. Roo-roo-roo!

[*Exit pursued by ROMANZO.*]

The Scene closes.

Scene II.

Boots it to tell what all have seen?

A Maybush on a village-green!

Its turban'd head with garland wound,

Its rich skirts spreading on the ground;

Like a sultana of the East,
 In all her gay apparel drest.
 Emerald, turkis, ruby rare,
 Beryl, tourmaline are there ;
 Pearl, and precious chrysolite,
 Sapphire blue, and topaz bright ;
 With every gem that ever shone
 A Tartar's belt or bonnet on.
 But fresher in their different lustres,
 Our dew-besprent-festoons, and clusters ;
 Purer of tint, and with perfume
 Filling wide Nature's boundless room.—
 What is a jewel-dropping tree,
 O May-bush ! when compared to thee ?

STEPHANIA, ROSELLE, JACINTHA, GERONYMO,
and Peasants assembled.

CHORUS.

O May, thou art a merry time,
 Sing hi ! the hawthorn pink and pale !
 When hedge-pipes they begin to chime,
 And summer-flowers to sow the dale.

When lasses and their lovers meet
 Beneath the early village thorn,
 And to the sound of tabor sweet
 Bid welcome to the Maying-morn !
 O May, thou art, &c.

When gray-beards and their gossips come
 With crutch in hand our sports to see,
 And both go tottering, tattling home,
 Topful of wine as well as glee !
 O May, thou art, &c.

But Youth was aye the time for bliss,
 So taste it, Shepherds ! while ye may :
 For who can tell that joy like this
 Will come another holiday ?
 O May, thou art, &c.

First Peasant. Ha ! ha ! ha !—Now ! who's for nine-pins ?

Second Peasant. Who's for ball?

Third Peasant. I!

Fourth Peasant. And I!

Fifth Peasant. I'm for the bowling green!

Sixth Peasant. For ball! for ball!—Pins are only for women and tailors!

GERONYMO. Stay your feet, lads!—and your tongues, ladies!—they are both running without reason. Will you hear me?

All. Hear him! hear him! hear him!

GERONYMO. Plague on't! You make more noise in keeping silence than the town-criers. Will you stop your bawling?

All. Ay, stop your bawling! stop your bawling!

GERONYMO. Mercy upon me, what a set of peace-makers!—Then you will not listen to me?—You fellow here, with the bull-neck, roar me down these rascals!—only, pray, do not gape so wide, else there is some danger your head may fall off by the ears.

First Peasant. Silence! Let no man say another word, or I'll make him cry *peccavi*!

GERONYMO. Well said, Hircoles!—you might play Hircoles, without his club, for your fist falls like a weaver's beam.—Now be quiet! Hear what I have to bring forth! This it is, lads; this it is, fellows: or, as it were, this is the tot of the matter; that is to say, in short and briefly to complain the whole business.—We have forgotten to choose a May Queen!—Shall I be heard in this land hereafter?

All. A May-Queen! a May-Queen! who shall we choose? Who is she to be? Which is the handsomest? And the prettiest? Ay, and the most beautiful too? Which is she?

GERONYMO. Shall I be heard again, I say?

First Peasant. Silence!

GERONYMO. Thanks, thou stertorean fellow!—If Wisdom would be heard she must always keep a swaggerer like this at her elbow. I say, my friends: I humbly repose, that is, I succumb to your better judgments, whether, in this case—mark me!—thus it stands, or, as I may say, here 'tis: There are so many of these lasses who are the handsomest, and prettiest, ay, and most beautiful one of them all, that I think it would go hard with us to choose her who is the most so. Therefore I humbly assent, and maintain, and suspect, that it is better to let it go by straws.

All. Ay! ay! let straws end it!

GERONYMO. Why come then! see what it is to have a noddle. Here is my hat to hold the lots. Mistress Stephania, a straw for you; another straw for you, Mistress Roselle; another, 'nother, 'nother,—straws apiece for the prettiest six among ye. Now listen to me: this is the case, and thus it stands, or as may be delivered in one word, here 'tis: Whoever of ye pulls the longest straw is to be May-Queen. Do I speak like a wiseacre or no?

All. Like a very Salmon! Spoke like a very Salmon!

Second Peasant. Should we not take the senses of the assembly upon it?

All. No! no! no!—Come, lasses! draw! draw! draw!

STEPHANIA. Very well. [*Pulls a straw.*]

ROSELLE. Ay, very well. [*Pulls.*]

First Girl. [*Pulls.*] O lawk! such a pudget of a thing!

Second Girl. Now for me! [*Pulls.*]

Third Girl. [*Pulling.*] I vow I am the longest of you all!—I vow so it is!

Enter OSME above, playing on a lyre.

STEPHANIA. Hark! hark! O hark! what measures play,
So sweet! so clear! yet far away!

ROSELLE. Whence is the music? who can say?

JACINTHA. 'Tis like the crystal sound of wells,
Betrampled by the sparkling rain!

STEPHANIA. Or dew-drops fall'n on silver bells
That tingle o'er and o'er again!

First Girl. 'Tis in the air!

Second Girl. 'Tis underground!

Third Girl. 'Tis everywhere!

Fourth Girl. The magic sound!

All. Hush! O hush! and let us hear:

'Tis too beautiful to fear.

OSME sings and plays.

Hither! hither!

O come hither!

Lads and lasses come and see?

Trip it neatly,

Foot it featly,

O'er the grassy turf to me!

Here are bowers
 Hung with flowers,
 Richly curtain'd halls for you !
 Meads for rovers
 Shades for lovers,
 Violet beds, and pillows too !

Purple heather
 You may gather
 Sandal-deep in seas of bloom !
 Pale-faced lily,
 Proud Sweet-Willy,
 Gorgeous rose, and golden broom !

Odorous blossoms
 For sweet bosoms,
 Garlands green to bind the hair ;
 Crowns and kirtles
 Weft of myrtles,
 Youth may choose, and Beauty wear !

Brightsome glasses
 For bright faces
 Shine in ev'ry rill that flows ;
 Every minute
 You look in it
 Still more bright your beauty grows !

Banks for sleeping,
 Nooks for peeping,
 Glades for dancing, smooth and fine !
 Fruits delicious
 For who wishes,
 Nectar, dew, and honey-wine !

Hither ! hither !
 O come hither !
 Lads and lasses come and see !
 Trip it neatly,
 Foot it featly,
 O'er the grassy turf to me !

[*Exeunt Peasants led by the music.*]

Scene III.

A bosky woodland near the bounds
 Of Queen Morgana's sunny grounds.
 Under a spreading maple tree
 Sits a rude Swain, as rude may be,
 With canes, and marsh flags on his knee;
 Seven hollow pipes his artless hands
 Strive to conjoin with rushy bands;
 And with a grave, yet smirking air,
 He trolls satyric ditties there,
 Forgetful of the form he wore,
 And almost all he was before.

ANDREA. I have grown wondrous 'rithmetical of late,
 being, indeed, most lamentably given to poesy and numbers.
 But chiefly of all I affect the pastoral, the *fa-la-lal*, or as it
 may be very opprobriously described,—the lambkin style of
 farcification. Let me see: what can I do in this way?

'Tis sweet among the purling groves
 To sit in sunny shade,
 And hear the frisky turtle-doves
 Skip o'er the 'namelled glade.
 The amorous sheep go coo-oo!
 The birds go baa-aa too!
 And I upon my crook do play
 While o'er the fields I take my—steps!

The dappled daisy—No!—
 When hairy morn—Pize on't!—
 Where meadows full of fishes be,
 And streams with daisies dight,
 My dappled goats do pipe to me
 From Night to hairy Morn.
 The fragrant goats sing faa-laa,
 The Shepherd he goes maa-aa!
 Till both are tired of food and play,
 And then he drives his flock astray.

Such is the peaceful Shepherd's strife—
 And here be two of his black sheep—

Enter GRUMIEL and MOMIEL.

MOMIEL. Didst thou not mark them winding down the glen,

Flaunting their quickset crowns ?

GRUMIEL. Ay, what of that ?

MOMIEL. What of it ? humph !—this fellow hunts as keen

As a blind greyhound ; cannot scent his prey
Though rubb'd to 's nose.

GRUMIEL. What's to be made of clowns
And country-queans ?

MOMIEL. Ingenious Mischief turns
The clumsiest tools into brave instruments
When work is to be done. Leave all to me :
I'll save thy back a drubbing.—Ho ! thou knave !

ANDREA. The same to you, sir ; and may you } long
deserve the title !

MOMIEL. Put on this ivy skirt, this gown of leaves
To hide thy shaggy limbs : and here !—this too—
This bulrush bonnet, that thy horns and ears
May perk not out.

ANDREA. It fits me like a bee hive, or an old hat on a
broomstick, to fright crows in a corn-field. What a far-
thingale too !—Now if I were only simple enough, I might
pass for a wild Indianness, and exhibit myself as a pattern
of unsophisticated nature.

MOMIEL. Listen to me, dull beast !—Thou hast but
smell'd

The oblivious liquor, yet art drunk as though
Thou hadst been soak'd in it. Hear what I say,
And what thou hast to do. If thou forget'st it,
I'll bend four pines to earth, whose strong recoil
Shall fling thee piece-meal o'er their whistling backs
To where the great winds rise !

ANDREA. Sir, I will not regret a tittle of it, if it were
even as long and tedious as a curtain-lecture to a tired
courier.

MOMIEL. Thou wert best not. Come hither to this
knoll ;
See'st thou yon troop of villagers ?

ANDREA. I do.

MOMIEL. They're seeking a May-Queen : dost hear ?

ANDREA. Why, ay,
Catching May-flies, you say.

MOMIEL. A May-Queen, fool !

[Strikes him.

GRUMIEL. Good ! rap it into his skull !

MOMIEL. What was 't I said?

ANDREA. Eh?—Oh!—Ay! catching a May-Queen.

MOMIEL. So!—well!—

Thou hast no more to do, but take this wreath
And cast it in their path. Dost hear me, idiot?

ANDREA. With my two eyes.

MOMIEL. Begone then, to thy service!
Look thou perform it, or I'll strangle thee!

[*Exeunt GRUMIEL and MOMIEL.*]

ANDREA. Fear not; I will do it most ingenuously.

The Scene changes to another part of the Glen.

Enter the Peasants.

ROSELLE. This will-o'-the-wisp of a musician hath stopt
in time; I am weary almost to fainting. Proceed, neighbours;
I must sit down a moment on this bank.

STEPHANIA. Nay, I will bear you company. Go on,
friends; we'll follow you towards the cottage, when my
sister is able to walk.

Peasants. Very well. Trudge on, Geronymo. You are
the head gander in this wild goose exhibition.

[*Exeunt Peasants.*]

The Scene changes again.

Enter the Peasants.

GERONYMO. Where are we now, can any body tell?

Second Peasant. In a maze, that's certain.

GERONYMO. Thank ye, for the discovery: What a
treasure thou would'st be to a map-maker!

Third Peasant. We are all astray, like the Babes in the
Wood, and therefore I see nothing better we can do but
innocently sit down upon the ground, and kiss one-another.

GERONYMO. Stay; who's there?—Hollo! neighbour in
the green petticoat; a word with ye!

Enter ANDREA.

First Girl. Lawk! such a fright!

Second Girl. Prithee, good woman, from what pedlar do
you buy your millinery?

GERONYMO. I remember seeing such another face upon
a city-fountain, with a cap of reeds like a floating island.

First Peasant. Haw ! haw ! haw ! haw !—'A look as if 'a was carrying off a bed of turnips !—haw ! haw ! haw ! haw !

Third Peasant. Excellent !—Or crying jonquils by the hundred !

Fourth Peasant. Who are you !—Whence come you ?—What 's your business ?

ANDREA. 'T is more easily told than yours to ask it. But no matter : Stand round, and I will unlighten you with a clear exploration.

Fifth Peasant. I 'll warrant you she 's a basket-maker, by these rushes.

All. Well ?—What is't ?—Speak !—Now !—Begin !—Out with 't !

ANDREA. Why then, if you will know, the long and the short of the matter is this, *videlicet* : I am come to elect myself unanimously your May-Queen !

All. A May-Queen ! ha ! ha ! ha !—You a May-Queen !—O good !—O the monster !—

ANDREA. Monster !—do ye select me for a monster ?—Perchance there are others in the company who have as good a right to the honour, if there were a fair show of horns for it. But here ! ye ungrateful plebeians ! take this halter—[*throwing down the wreath*] and hang yourselves in it, *verbatim et literatim* every one of ye ! I have done with such vagabonds ! [Exit, but returns.

Fifth Peasant. I knew she was a weaver of some sort or other, by her pestilent tongue ?

First Girl. Lawk ! what is this ?

[Taking up the wreath.

Second Girl. O beautiful !

Third Girl. Let me see it !

Fourth Girl. We'll all see it ?—let it go round !

Fifth Girl. What a precious—Lo ! here's a scroll, too, stuck in the middle !—Where is Jacintha ?—She is a scholar—Let her read the intents of it. She can say her *a, b, ab*, as quick as nobody.

JACINTH. [Reads.]

This wreath by fairy fingers twined,
One brow, and one alone, will bind :
Her whom it suits let all obey,
And choose her as their Queen of May.

First Girl. Lawk ! I'm sure it will just fit me : it is just my size—

[*Puts on the wreath, which enlarges, and falls about her to the ground.*]

ANDREA. By Saint Bridget, then, you must be just the cut of a landlady!

Second Girl. Let me try it!

[*It contracts to a single tuft on her head.*]

ANDREA. She wears it as a hen sparrow does her topping. It will come to me after all!

[*The girls all try it, but without success.*]

All. Nay, we must look farther. Where is Stephanía? Where is Roselle?—Here they come! Show it! give it them!

Enter STEPHANIA, and ROSELLE.

Fourth Girl. Whoever this fits is to be May-Queen. 'T is a fairy garland. Read here!

STEPHANIA. [*Trying it.*] Pooh! it has slipt off me—

ANDREA. Like a cat down a cottage-eave!

ROSELLE. Then it must be mine!—Come! I'll be chaired! [*Trying it on.*] Plague on't! 't is bewitched! I'll none of it.

ANDREA. Well said, Mistress Magnanimity!

STEPHANIA. Where did ye get it?

ROSELLE. How did you come by it?

GERONYMO. Why, let me speak—here 't is: From this smooth cheeked damsel before ye; this Water-goddess!

STEPHANIA. As sure as sure, I see our friend Andrea in disguise! hid beneath these flags and rushes, like Love amongst the Roses! 'T is he! What say you, Roselle?

ROSELLE. I would almost swear to that leering eye of his, with the crow's-foot stepping into it! But he has grown as barbarous as an ape since we last saw him. It is! it is the self-same gentleman! Does he come in this habit to frighten us? Hang him, scarecrow!

GERONYMO. An imposthume! An imposthume! He is an imposthume, neighbours!

All. Ho! a wolf in sheep's clothing!—Tear off his rushy cap there! Off with it! [*They pull off his cap.*]

STEPHANIA and ROSELLE. Ah!—Save us!—deliver us!

ANDREA. What is the matter with the gipsies?—Do they take me for the ghost of some young man whom they have seduced to commit homicide?

ROSELLE. O now indeed unhappy Signior Pimplenose!

STEPHANIA. Miserable Ribobolo! Mercy upon us! what a pair of ears he has got!

ANDREA. Why, what fault have you with my ears, little Mistress Red Riding-Hood?—Am I going to swallow you?

STEPHANIA. What new mishap has overtaken you?—Have you been in the pillory since we saw you, that your ears are stretched to such a size? Have you been hectoring in a tap-room, and been pulled out by the ears, that they are lengthened so prodigiously?

ANDREA. Prodigious!—Why, what would you have of them?—I'm sure they are better than those half-crown pieces of yours with holes punched i' the middle! You have no more ears than a fish! Methinks it is ye who have been in the pillory, and have had your ears cropt for perjury, like a holly-bush. Show me any beast upon earth but yourselves with such apologies for sound-catchers, and I'll pare mine down to the heel like an old cheese.—No! these, indeed, are something like ears! these are respectable hearing-leathers! But yours!—I would as soon think of listening through a couple of penny whistles!—Perchance you will say my horns, too, are a little branchy or so?

STEPHANIA. Horrible! horrible!

ROSELLE. *Ave Maria! santa purissima!*

GERONYMO. *Et secula seculorum!*—O for a priest to conjure him!

ANDREA. Well, come, this is good now! as if they never saw horns before!

STEPHANIA. Never on you! never on you! D'ye think I'd keep company with a rhinoceros?

ROSELLE. Some wicked fairy has charmed him into this shape! he is enchanted!

ANDREA. Charming and enchanting!—Why ay, they always said these ornaments became me.

ROSELLE. O dreadful!—had you these budders when we knew you at the mill?

ANDREA. These?—Bless you, I should take cold without them!—I never was without horns in my life! I was born with them, like a young snail. My horns and ears grew together, one behind the other, like mushrooms.

ROSELLE. Nay, 'tis false! you had them not!—we should have seen them!

ANDREA. O effrontery! what will the world come to at last?—They will begin to persuade me just now that I never wore hooves either; but that these feet are no better than theirs, letter L's turned under them.—

[Showing his feet.

Peasants. The devil! the devil in a bottle-green petticoat!—Fly, neighbours! run for it, countrymen!—Off! off!—Let us break our own necks rather than be eaten alive by this goat-footed heretic!

[*They run away.*]

ANDREA. As I'm a person, I never saw such ill-bred people in my life!—They were never at court, as I was, that's plain as the face upon my nose!—Let them die in their simplicity, ignorants!—I wash their hands of me for ever!

[*Exit.*]

Scene IV.

Lost in a fit of meditation
ROMANZO takes his sullen station
Fast by a rock, from which a stream
Tumbles its little waves of cream
Into a basin, whence it wells
Clearly and calmly through the dells.
The spot is lone, I grant, but then
So is the whole Enchanted Glen;
And though our Youth would seem to roam,—
'T is not ten steps from Sylvia's home.

ROMANZO. Her mother shuns me, and with eyes averse,
Hardly endures my sight. What she may think,
I cannot tell; but that denial strange
Of my fool servant, gave her cautious nature
Reason to doubt I am not what I say.
Yet I will not forsake them:—Some dark storm
Seems to make heavy the dull air about us,
Although the sky is clear. I'll see it down;
Perchance I may have leave, if it do come,
To stand between the thunder-bolt and them:
This is a hope!—My Sylvia, too, is kind,
Still kind! and with yet dearer, sweeter smiles,
Endeavours to repair her mother's frowns.—
What noise is here?

Enter the Peasants.

Some villagers a-maying: Who are ye?

GERONYMO. Why here 't is, your worship: We are the most harmful people in the world; and indeed would not tread upon a worm if it sought our mercy. Yet have we been assailed here in this wood, by—saving your worship's worship!—no less a personage than Satan himself, in the

form of a mountain-goat, only that he stood on 's hind legs, bolt upright ; with eyes like two red-hot warming-pans, ten horns, each as tall as a young oak-tree, and whisking a long tail over his head as if he was going to thrash us with it.—In short—

ROMANZO. Be you at peace !—I have expell'd him hence. It is no devil, but a mortal wretch
Whom the elves sport with, and have thus transform'd,
To make them merriment.

GERONYMO. We humbly thank your worship for exercising him from this place. Can your worship detect us to a little green cottage, that bubbles over the stream somewhere here about?

ROMANZO. Here come the owners ; they will best direct you. [Retires.]

GERONYMO. A very personable sort of person, I'll assure ye, for a person of these parts !—O lud ! here is a most preternatural creature !

Enter SYLVIA and AGATHA.

Peasants. Huzza ! huzza !—This is she ! This is she whom we have been looking for !—Not such a beauty in all the Earth, nor in the New World either !—Welcome to our Queen ! welcome ! welcome !—Huzza !

SYLVIA. Good people ! wherefore do ye come with shouts

To break the holy silence of this vale ?
Would ye aught with us ?

Peasants. To it, Geronymo !

SYLVIA. Why do you call me "Queen" ? and throw your wreaths

At my unworthy feet ?—By my simplicity !
I do not love the title !

Peasants. Plague on 't ! will nobody out with a speech ?—I could as soon look at the sun in his brightness !—My tongue cleaves to the roof of my mouth, like the hammer to an old bell !—She's a rare pretty one, that's certain !—Geronymo ! where is thy 'ration ?—Where have we lived that we have never seen her before ?—Geronymo ! plague take him, where is his speech ? where is his 'ration ?—Begin ! I'll second thee, man ! I'll stand behind thee !

GERONYMO. Most mightiful ! and most beautiful ! and most dutiful princess ! We do most passionately design and request that—And—so—hum !—that—hem !—In a word,

and as I may say, thus it stands, or here 't is, most lovely flower of this flowery loveliness! We have been tickled hither in the ear by an indivisible singing-bird, through dangers and demons, over precipices and watercresses, in spite of quagmires and quicksands, by numberless out-of-the-way short-cuts, and straight-forward roundabouts, from our village to this place—

Peasants. Bravo! bravo!

GERONYMO. Mar me not! I am in the very passion of it!—And so, to include my narration, thou paradox of beauty? thou superlatively super-excellent and most sweet creature! we come in a body to offer you our loves and submissions; for 't is only looking at your pretty face for one moment to see that you, and none but you, are she whom Destiny has cut out with her shears for our May-Queen!

Peasants. Huzza!—the wreath!—the wreath!—Crown her!—Huzza!

SYLVIA is crowned as May-Queen.

SYLVIA. 'T is all so sudden that I cannot strive—
Nay choose some other—it will not become—

AGATHA. Would every crown were worn as peacefully!

SYLVIA is carried by the Peasants to a flowery bank where she is installed as May-Queen.

Peasants. The song! the song that our pastor taught us for the 'casion!—Come!—the roundel! the roundel!—Take hands, and sing it as we dance about and about her.

Here 's a bank with rich cowslips, and cuckoo-buds strewn,
To exalt your bright looks, gentle Queen of the May;
Here 's a cushion of moss for your delicate shoon,
And a woodbine to weave you a canopy gay!

Here 's a garland of red maiden-roses for you,
Such a beautiful wreath is for beauty alone!
Here 's a golden king-cup, brimming over with dew,
To be kiss'd by a lip just as sweet as its own!

Here are bracelets of pearl from the fount in the dale,
That the Nymph of the wave on your wrists doth bestow;
Here 's a lily-wrought scarf, your sweet blushes to veil,
Or to lie on that bosom like snow upon snow!

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Here's a myrtle enwreath'd with a jessamine band,
To express the fond twining of Beauty and Youth :
Take this emblem of love in thy exquisite hand,
And do THOU sway the evergreen sceptre of Truth !

Then around you we 'll dance, and around you we 'll sing !
To soft pipe, and sweet tabor we 'll foot it away !
And the hills, and the vales, and the forests shall ring
While we hail you our lovely young Queen of the May !

GERONYMO. I am taken ! I am quite taken !—Venus, the God of Love, has shot me through the breast with his quiver ! My heart falls asunder like a cleft apple !—Madam Agatha, I would have some words with you.

AGATHA. With me, friend ?

GERONYMO. Ay, Madam.—Now to break the ice in delicate manner !—You must know, Madam ; the case is thus, or thus it stands, or in other terms and insinuations, here 't is, and this is the tot of the matter : I am over head and ears with Mistress Sylvia, your daughter—in short, I love her to destruction—and so, if our politics happen to suit, I hope we shall have your dissent to our marriage.

AGATHA. (*Aside*). What should I say now ?—My mind misgives me about this Traveller, as he calls himself : and even were he what he pretends, is he a fit husband for my lowly daughter ? This honest villager would make my Sylvia a homelier, but perchance a happier mate.

GERONYMO. Well ?—What say you, Madam Quietly ?

AGATHA. How now ? What is the matter ?

SYLVIA. O me ! a heavy slumber seals mine eyes !
Vapours as thick as Night curtain me round
With herse-like folds ; and the moist hand of Death
Laid coldly on my brow presses me down
Upon the dreary pillow of Oblivion.
Mother !—where art thou ? Fare thee well, my love !
Good-night for ever !—ever !—

AGATHA. Alas ! what strange disorder ?—These changes and surprises have wrought too much upon her tenderness. Bear her within, my friends, to her green chamber. This way—gently—so—

[*She is borne in.*]

Second Peasant. This joy hath a sorrowful ending. Let us go home, and return to-morrow by daylight to inquire after her.

Peasants. Let us do so. Alas! poor maiden!

[*Exeunt.*

GERONYMO. Marry! I'll not stir a foot! I'll wait, Heaven willing! though 't were a thousand years: that I'm dissolved upon!

STEPHANIA. Ho! ho! my weathercock is inconstant, I see. But he shall not shift his tail without a breeze, or I'm no daughter of a true woman! So, Mister Geronymo! you are going to——

GERONYMO. I am, incontinently. [*Exit.*

ROSELLE. Follow him, sister; follow him. We'll give him no more peace than a kettle at a dog's tail. We'll make him wish himself deaf and us dumb; we'll speak knitting-needles into his ear, till his head grows all miz-miz and infusion.

STEPHANIA. The ungrateful fellow!—After all my pains to tangle him!

ROSELLE. The saucy jacknapes, rather! Come! he shall neither eat, drink, nor be merry, with any comfort, till he gives us satisfaction: We too can be dissolved upon this matter. Follow me! [*Exeunt.*

Scene V.

Within the Sorcerer's dread domain
Behold poor ANDREA again!
Hither the wily fiends decoyed him;
Being too simple to avoid 'em.
Whatever more beseems ye know,
The characters themselves will show.

GRUMIEL, MOMIEL, and ANDREA

GRUMIEL. Well, brain-spinner!
What fly is this fine web of thine to catch?
Plague on thy sleights and stratagems! ne'er used
But when the arm lacks power.—Deeds! deeds! deeds!
'T is sleight of hand that suits me best!

MOMIEL. Tall soul!—
Where'er he comes are blows, and blows enough;—
But then he gets them; that he calls his courage!
If courage were esteemed by what it bears
No Pantaloon were ever half so valiant,
For he stands kicks like compliments; and bangs
Too hard for Punchinello's wooden cheek,

He takes like fan-taps, ladies' punishment!—
I 'll no such courage!

GRUMIEL. Well? what mutter'st thou?

MOMIEL. Let me work on, I tell thee or thou'lt rue it:
Spoil me this scheme and I 'll undo thy doings!—
Come hither, block!

To ANDREA.

Stoop down, and hold thy head
Under this weed I wring: the juice of it
Dropt in the winding channel of thine ear
Will reach the brain, and like a chymic drug
Precipitate the thick and muddy film
That now hangs dully, as a cloud in air,
Between the light and sense. Be thou again
The natural fool we found thee, but no more!

ANDREA. Thank ye, most considerate gentlemen!—ye
do not pinch my collar so woefully as at first. As I'm a
person! it shall do ye no disservice. Come! speak the
word; if ye are ambitious for office, say it! I will recom-
mend ye as the most tender-hearted catchpolls: the most
worthy to be thief-catchers and bumbailiffs, that any honest
man would like to have to do withal.

MOMIEL. Peace, gabbler!—Look at thy feet!

ANDREA. O marvellous!

MOMIEL. Stoop o'er this green reflector, and behold
Within its shivering mirror, what thou art.
Wilt bend, and kiss thine image?

ANDREA. That is not me!

Eh?—let me feel!—'Tis true!—O lack! O transmigra-
tion! Why my own father, wise as he is, would not know
me again!—When did these sprouts put forth?—I am fur-
nished like a two-year-old buffalo!—they will slay me
shortly for my hide and horns!—There is enough upon my
head to set up a dozen dealers in tortoise-shell combs and
knife-handles:—Ears too, into which you might thrust your
hands like hedging-gloves!—O lamentable! lamentable!

GRUMIEL. Knock him o' the head!

MOMIEL. No!—Listen, thou wretch:
Our art which has deformed thee, can re-form
As easily. But thou must earn with pains
Thy disenthralment from this bestial shape.
Wilt thou, on promise to be re-made man—

ANDREA. I will!—Turn out your Ogres and your Green
Dragons; I'll put them to flight like crows!—Where be
these Anthropophagi?—Show 'em to me!—Anything but

the old Lady of Babylon herself, I'll undertake for; and even with her too, I would venture to cross a horn!—Give me a cudgel, if you love me! and let me be doing—

GRUMIEL. (*Strikes him*). There!—is't not a tough one? eh?

ANDREA. This is giving me the cudgel with a vengeance!—He is an orator, I suppose, and speaks to the feelings! an indelible-impression-leaver, hang him!

MOMIEL. Wilt not have done?

I'll crack thy neck if thou speak'st one more word!—

List what I say: Follow this creeping stream

And it will lead thee to a hut, where live

An old dame and her daughter. Live, I say,

Though now I guess thou'lt find the younger one

Laid on a flowery bier, with doleful clowns

Trooping around it. Her thou must contrive

To bear off hitherward; and fetch her safe

To where I will appoint. Do this but featly

And thou shalt be restored by our great Art,

To thy old shape. What answer? Is't agreed?

ANDREA. Say no more!—I will carry her off as a lion does a lamb. What! did I not belong to the honourable fraternity of conveyancers?—Did I not lie for a whole summer, among the Lazzaroni, on the steps of the Transport Office, at Naples? She shall be translated hither as softly as a bishop to a new benefice; as dexterously as if I had served an apprenticeship to an undertaker, or been purveyor to an anatomist. There are, to be sure, sweeter occupations under the moon than body-snatching; but the old proverb sanctifies it, on this occasion, for “Needs must”—the rest might be personal—Mum!

MOMIEL. Come, we will show thee where we'll take our stand,

To watch thy enterprise, and see the issue,

That we may give, receiving; or perchance,

If need be, to rush out and help thy weakness.

Follow the clue I gave thee: we'll be near.

[*Exeunt.*]

ACT IV.

Scene I.

MORNING : I would but cannot sing
 How with light foot, and half-spread wing,—
 Or as a lady-page that soothes
 A steed whose neck she hardly smoothes,
 While proud, yet mad, to be carest,
 He turns his red eye on her breast,
 Snorts with high rage, yet stoops his crest—
 Day's bright conductress in doth come
 Sleeking two coursers pied with foam,
 And her white clasp their bridles on,
 Leads in the chariot of the Sun.
 Enough to say that Morn appears,
 When smiles may turn so soon to tears.
 How know I there's no cause to weep?
 What meant that fatal cloud of sleep?
 In yonder bower my SYLVIA lies,
 O that the gentle girl would rise.
 Glad my fond heart, and greet mine eyes !—
 Come in, come in, thou loitering lover !
 I burn till this suspense be over.

Enter ROMANZO.

ROMANZO. The dawn springs, yet no day-light to my
 soul !—
 Soft ! I will wake this bird, whose heavenly song
 Cheers all beneath it. She was wont to pour
 Her morning salutation to the sun,
 From peaked hill, ere he had tipt with light
 The watery lamps that hang upon the thorn,
 Or tinged their crystals blue. Come, let me wake her
 With a lark's call !—

Awake thee, my Lady-love !
 Wake thee, and rise !
 The sun through the bower peeps
 Into thine eyes !

Behold how the early lark
 Springs from the corn!
 Hark, hark how the flower-bird
 Winds her wee horn!

The swallow's glad shriek is heard
 All through the air!
 The stock-dove is murmuring
 Loud as she dare!

Apollo's wing'd bugleman
 Cannot contain,
 But peals his loud trumpet-call
 Once and again!

Then wake thee, my Lady-love!
 Bird of my bower!
 The sweetest and sleepest
 Bird at this hour!

No stir?—no word?—what should this silence be?—
 O she is dead i' the night!—Sylvia! What, Sylvia!
 Away, false ceremony! I'll enter here!

[Bursts in through the lattice door of SYLVIA's chamber.]

Enter AGATHA from the door of the cottage.

AGATHA. Alas! what noise was that?—My child!—
 Geronymo!—
 Help! help!—Some villain—
[Exit into SYLVIA's chamber through the lattice door.]

Enter ROMANZO from the cottage-door, with the body of SYLVIA in his arms. GERONYMO, STEPHANIA, ROSELLE, JACINTHA, and the other Peasants.

ROMANZO. Peace, good woman! peace!—
 She sleeps like marble on a monument,
 As cold and soundly—But not dead!—not dead!—
 No! no!—Else that firm-propp'd, high-fixed ocean
 Pendant above us, would melt o'er our heads,
 And drown the miserable sight in tears!—
 O, what will come of this?

AGATHA. *[From the cottage door.]* Where has he ta'en
 her?

ROMANZO. I sought you, painfully. Away! away!
You shall not have her now. Hark! was she sighing?

GERONYMO. Alack, she's dead! stark dead!

ROMANZO. Thou slanderous liar!
But for this precious burden in my arms,
I'd teach thee croak—

AGATHA. Sylvia!—She's gone!—she's dead!—She
stirs not!—breathes not!—

ROMANZO. Dead?

GERONYMO. Aye, dead as clay!

ROMANZO. Is it e'en so?—Why, then, I do beseech ye
That we may both be buried in one grave!

AGATHA. O he has murder'd her!—he has disgraced
My child, and then destroy'd her!

Peasants. Villain! villain!

GERONYMO. Down with him! down with him! Drive
him away! Off! off!

[*The Peasants assault* ROMANZO.]

ROMANZO. O use your will! my pride of man is o'er!
If all your staves were straws, I could not face them!

[*Exit, the Peasants following.*]

AGATHA, STEPHANIA, and ROSELLE bear SYLVIA
to the cottage.

The Scene closes.

Scene II.

Deep in a wild sequester'd nook,
Where Phebus casts no scorching look,
But Earth's soft carpet, moist and green,
Freckled with golden spots is seen;
Where with the wind that swayeth him
The pine spins slowly round his stem;
The willow weeps as in despair
Amid her green dishevelled hair;
And long-arm'd elms, and beeches hoar,
Spread a huge vault of umbrage o'er:
Yet not so thick but yellow day
Makes through the leaves his splendid way;
And though in solemnness of shade,
The place is silent, but not sad:

Here as the Naiad of the spring
 Tunes her deep-sounding liquid string,
 And o'er the streamlet steals her song,
 Leading its sleepy waves along,—
 How rich to lay your limbs at ease
 Under the humming trellises,
 Bow'd down with clustering blooms and bees !
 And leaning o'er some antique root
 Murmur as old a ditty out,
 To suit the low incessant roar,
 The echo of some distant shore,
 Where the sweet-bubbling waters run
 To spread their foamy tippets on :
 Or mid the dim green forest aisles
 Still haughtier than cathedral piles,
 Enwapt in a fine horror stand
 Musing upon the darkness grand.
 Now looking sideways through the glooms
 At ivied trunks shap'd into tombs ;
 Now up the pillaring larches bare
 Arching their Gothic boughs in air :
 Perchance you wander on, in pain
 To catch green glimpses of the plain,
 Half glad to see the light again !
 And wading through the seeded grass
 Out to a sultry knoll you pass ;
 There with cross'd arms, in moral mood,
 Dreadless admire the cloister'd wood,
 Returning your enhancèd frown,
 Darker than night, stiller than stone.

But now the Sun with dubious eye
 Measures the downfall of the sky,
 And pauses, trembling, on thy brow,
 Olympus, ere he plunge below
 Where ever-thundering Ocean lies
 Spread out in blue immensities.
 No stir the forest dames among,
 No aspen wags a leafy tongue,
 Absorb'd in meditation stands
 The cypress with her swathed hands,
 And even the restless Turin-tree
 Seems lost in a like reverie ;
 Zephyr hath shut his scented mouth,
 And not a cloud moves from the south ;

The hoary thistle keeps his beard,
 Chin-deep amid the sea-green sward,
 And sleeps unbrushed by any wing
 Save of that gaudy flickering thing
 Too light to wake the blue-hair'd king ;
 Alone of the bright-coated crowd
 This vanity is seen abroad,
 Sunning his ashy pinions still
 On flowery bank or ferny hill :
 Now not a sole wood-note is heard,
 The wild reed breathes no trumpet-word;
 Ev'n the home-happy cushat quells
 Her note of comfort in the dells ;—
 'Tis Noon !—and in the shadows warm
 You only hear the gray-flies swarm,
 You gaze between the earth and sky,
 With wide, unconscious, dizzy eye,
 And like the listless willow seem
 Dropping yourself into a dream.
 But look !—who rides before you now,
 Light cavalier ! upon a bough ?—
 Awake, and hear the merry elf
 Say what he comes about himself.

NEPHON *astride upon an elm-branch swinging himself up and down.*

Heigh ho ! heigh ho !
 Ponderous as the fleecy snow,
 Up and down, and up I go !
 I can raise a storm, I trow !—
 Pumping up the air below
 Off the branch myself I blow ! [*Descends.*]

O who is so merry, so merry, heigh ho !
 As the light-hearted fairy, heigh ho !

He dances and sings
 To the sound of his wings,
 With a hey, and a heigh, and a ho !

O who is so merry, so airy, heigh ho !
 As the light-headed fairy, heigh ho !

His nectar he sips
 From the primrose's lips,
 With a hey, and a heigh, and a ho !

O who is so merry, so wary, heigh ho!
 As the light-footed fairy, heigh ho!
 His night is the noon,
 And his sun is the moon,
 With a hey, and a heigh, and a ho!

But I, forsooth, must work by day
 Because I am a cunning fay!
 'Ads me! I'm sorry I'm so clever,
 Else I had nought to do for ever,
 But mingle with the moon-light elves,
 That catch the spray on river shelves
 For snowballs to bepelt each other,
 Or deep in pearly tombs to smother.
 Ah, Nephon! but the queen, you know,
 Calls you her blithe and dapper beau,
 You must not scorn her service so.

 Hem! Hum!—let me see!—
 What is my first deed to be?—

Here I take my chair of state
 Underneath this sunflower great;
 Now I cock my arms, and frown
 Like village-beadle in blue gown;
 Now I stroke my beard, and now
 Wrinkle deep my sapient brow,
 That I may appear to be
 Lost in mine own profundity.—
 Ay; we have matters grave to do:
 So with a short corant, or two,
 Ere I begin,—around yon flower
 I'll sing a span-new sonnet o'er.

Pretty lily! pretty lily!
 Why are you so pale?
 Why so fond of lone-abiding
 Ever in a vale?

Pretty lily! pretty lily!
 Are you lover-lorn?
 That you stand so droopy-headed,
 Weeping night and morn.

[*A voice from the flower.*]

Idle fairy! idle fairy!
Prattle here no more,
But be gone, and do your bidding
As you should before.

NEPHON. Ha?—ha?—that's Osmé!—Come, I know
your voice;

It is the sweetest of our tribe:—Come forth;
You need not hide within that flowery bell,
Nor think to cheat me; come, I know you well.

OSMÉ. [*Coming out of the lily.*]

Nephon, the queen is angry that you stay,
And sent me down to bid you haste away.
Two fiends are coming: dark, malignant things!
List! you may hear the brushing of their wings
Along the distant grass.—Away, dear Nephon!

NEPHON. Off! off! off!
Like a needle of light from the sun
So straight to my object I run!

[*They vanish.*]

Scene III.

Within the Vale, a little vale
Strew'd with its own sweet flowers pale;
And made by deep surrounding hill
More lonely, yet more lovely still.

Were a high-raised and hoary stone,
Cross-crown'd, a tomb, itself alone,—
I'd think yon mossy rock and gray
Were ev'n the very thing I say:
Were two green willows bending o'er
A stone, and seeming to deplore,
Proof that a slumberer lay beneath
Clasped to the icy cheek of Death,—
I'd think yon willows surely wept
Some one in that cold dalliance kept:—
Were garlands white, on willows hung,
Sign that one died, and died too young,
Changing the light robe for the pall,
The bridal for the funeral,—
Yon pallid wreaths would make me fear
Some Flower of Youth lay buried here:

Were yews, green-dar'ling in their bloom,
 Sentinels only of the tomb,—
 Were cypress-mourners standing round
 Ling'ers alone on holy ground.—
 Yon trees, as sullen as they seem,
 Would tell too plain a tale I deem.

Then say, when rock, and willow sweet,
 White garland, yew, and cypress meet,
 As here,—what should the group betoken?—
 Speak. Lover! though thy heart be broken!

ROMANZO *muffled in a cloak, solus.*

ROMANZO. Hither they bend them slowly. On this
 stone,

Green with the antique moss of many a year,
 I think they mean to lay her; and perform
 The simple rites which country-people love
 Around her gentle earth, ere it be borne
 To consecrated ground. Young heralds twain
 Have deckt the place already.—I'll retire:
 My presence might disturb the holy scene,
 And I would be at peace as well as she!
 My storm of life at length, I hope, is o'er;
 A stillness is upon me, like the pause
 That ushers in eternity!—'Tis well!

[Retires.]

The Procession enters. Six Maidens strewing flowers. The Dirgers. Then four Youths with a bier, on which SYLVIA is laid beneath a virgin pall. AGATHA supported by STEPHANIA and ROSELLE. GERONYMO, JACINTHA, and Peasants following.

DIRGE.

Wail! wail ye o'er the dead!
 Wail! wail ye o'er her!
 Youth's ta'en, and Beauty's fled,
 O then deplore her!

Strew! strew ye, Maidens! strew
 Sweet flowers and fairest!
 Pale rose, and pansy blue,
 Lily the rarest!

Wail! wail ye, &c.

Lay, lay her gently down.
 On her moss pillow,
 While we our foreheads crown
 With the sad willow!
 Wail! wail ye, &c.

Raise, raise the song of wo,
 Youths, to her honour!
 Fresh leaves, and blossoms throw,
 Virgins, upon her!
 Wail! wail ye, &c.

Round, round the cypress bier
 Where she lies sleeping,
 On every turf a tear,
 Let us go weeping!
 Wail! wail ye, &c.

GERONYMO. Cease!—we must bear her on. 'T is a long way to the village, and she must lie there a time before the priest will give her *viaticum*. Take up the bier!

JACINTHA. Should we leave the crown upon her thus!

Peasants. Ay! ay! she was our May-Queen, and shall go to the grave with all her honours about her like the greatest prince in Christendom. Come away!

Enter ANDREA.

ANDREA. As I'm a person, my old acquaintances! Beauteous Mistress Stephania, your servant! Lovely Mistress Roselle, yours! Ladies, one and all, I am your most devoted—

Peasants. The fiend! the fiend!—Away!

[They all run off, except AGATHA.]

AGATHA. Come twenty fiends I'll stay by thee, my child!

ANDREA. What a-vengeance do the people see in me to frighten them?—Alack! I forgot that I was a prodigy! a *lusum naturum*!—Yet, after all, I do not know that a pair of neatly-twisted antlers are such a runaway matter; unless I threatened to butt with them! Then as to cloven feet,—why, it is but having four toes, instead of ten, and make the most of it! The 'longation of my ears, indeed, I consider as a manifest improvement—an "accession" as we elegantly term it. So that, upon the whole, although I should be loth to flatter myself, I think I am a very

personable-looking—*Tizzy*, Master Andrea! *tizzy woo!*
 look what is before you. As I live, here is a dead virgin!
 It is she whom I am to elope with. 'Adad! she's a tender
 one! I shall feel her no more, than the flying horse *Packasses*
 (so they most asininely call him) does a starved poet. Now
 then for an act of regeneration— [*Approaching the bier.*]

ROMANZO. [*Darting forward.*]
 Miscreant, forbear! Hold off thy impious hands!

ANDREA. [*Falling on his knees.*]
 O lud! the ghost of my unfortunate master!

ROMANZO. Slave, thou denied'st me! Ingrate! Scorn
 of man!

Thou kneel'st for sacrifice at this pure altar,
 And from the deep pollution of thy touch
 Shalt cleanse it with thy blood!

AGATHA. [*Holding his arm.*] Stay!—stay!—no blood—
 Let there be none spill'd here. In death as life
 Her bed be stainless!—O profane it not
 With aught unsacred, or her cheek will grow
 More pale with horror still!

ANDREA. 'S life! I must not let the old lady lose the
 fruits of her eloquence! While she talks, I'll walk: he
 may catch me if he can, but at least I will show him a fair
 pair of heels for it— [*Runs away.*]

AGATHA. O youth! dead Beauty's soldier! pardon me!
 The widow's, the unchilded mother's thanks,
 Attend thee ever!—Let this act of thine
 Make thy last pillow softer than the babe's
 That smiling goes to Heaven!—O I have done ye
 Most cruel wrong!

ROMANZO. Speak not of it, I pray you.
 Let us stand here, on either side the shrine,
 And weep in silence o'er her.

Enter FLORETTA.

Look! oh look!
 Here is a little mourner come to join
 Its sparkly tears with ours!

FLORETTA. Where can my young beauty be
 That I have not found her?—
 Out, alas! this is not she
 With a shroud around her?

Ay!—But stay! I scent a flower—

Let me smell it—pah! pah!

Well I know its deadly power—

Come, unloose ye!—hah! hah!

[Takes off the magic wreath.]

Marble-one! Marble-one! rise from the tomb!

Long hast thou slumber'd—Awake thee! awake thee!

Eyes, to your lustre! and cheeks, to your bloom!

Lips, to your sweet smiling-office betake ye!

Hark, she sighs! the Maiden sighs,

Life and sense returning;

Now she opes her pretty eyes

Making a new morning!

One white arm across her brow,

Draws the sleepy fair-one:

Like a daystar rises now—

Is she not a rare one?

Still she sits in wonder so,

With her shroud around her,

Like a primrose in the snow,

When the Spring has found her;

The Pride of the Valley, the Flower of the Glen,

Is breathing, and blooming, and smiling again!

Kiss her, and press her,

Caress her, and bless her,

The sweet Maiden-Rose! the Sun's Darling!

NEPHON. *[Above.]*

Away! come away!

OSME. *[Above.]*

We have springes to lay,

While thou'rt chattering here—

NEPHON. *[Above.]*

Like a starling!

FLORETTA.

Then fare thee well,

My bonnibel!

I would thou wert indeed a flower;

Thy breast should be

My canopy,

And I a queen in that sweet bower!

[Vanishes.]

AGATHA. I did not hope such joy this side the grave :
O could my bosom clasp thee all—close! close!

ROMANZO. This hand's enough for me.

SYLVIA. Dear Mother!—Friend!—
Anon I'll say how much I love ye both :
I'm faint as yet, and wandering ; lead me in. [*Exeunt.*]

Enter NEPHON with a suit like ANDREA'S.

NEPHON. Now shall my disguise
Cheat the spinster's eyes.
And, as they shall rue,
Cheat the demons' too.
But I first must grow
Some five feet or so,
And swell out my span
To the size of man.

[*Takes the shape of ANDREA, and assumes his dress.*]

Mortals, blame us not
For the tricks we play ;
Were ye fairies, what
Would ye do, I pray ?
I would lay a crumb,
Could ye change your shapes,
Ye would all become
Mischievous as apes.
Troth I think at present
In the tricking trade,—
Though not quite as pleasant,—
Ye are just as bad !

[*Peasants without.*] A miracle! a miracle!

NEPHON. Here the boobies come,
Pat as A, B, C.
So behind the tomb
I will nestle me. [*Hides himself.*]

Enter the Peasants.

All. 'T is true, 't is certain, 't is a fact to be chronicled
in tradition. Here she lay ; here is her crown. She is
alive again ! Let us go, and welcome her back from dark-
ness to daylight. Huzza !

[*As they go out, NEPHON twitches ROSELLE by
the skirt.*]

NEPHON. Mistress Roselle! What, never a word for your old friend and bottle-companion, Andrea?

ROSELLE. Andrea!—I vow he is himself again! Turn about: let me see all your points, lest I be jockeyed. What have you done with your headgear? Have you been using the invaluable corn-and-horn-rubber of little Beppo, the pedlar, that you have gotten rid of your monstrosities?

NEPHON. Pooh! 't was only a disguise to see if you had love enough to remember me.—Ah! Mistress Roselle, you know by mine eloquent eye in what a situation my heart is.

ROSELLE. Why, as I guess, just under your left breast.

NEPHON. No, gypsy! but just under yours; there you have it, close prisoner, like a kernel in a filbert.—Hear me now: do you see this crown?

ROSELLE. Ay; why do you untangle it?

NEPHON. It makes me mad to see that pale-faced simperer wear this beautiful chaplet, while my lovely Roselle deserves so much better to be May-Queen.

ROSELLE. Why, as to that, indeed, I do not know for certain, but I think, as it were, that, mayhap, I shall look quite as well in it as my fine lady there. But, if the plaguy thing won't fit me—

NEPHON. Try it: I have taken out that twig, and if it does not fit you now, why cap never fitted a felon. Only try it.

ROSELLE. [*Putting it on.*] By our ladykin, so it does!—O beautiful!—What do you think, friend Andrea? Am I a Venus in dimity, or not?

NEPHON. You are the most exquisite, incomparable, incomprehensible princess, that ever made her appearance in wooden clogs and stuff petticoats.—[*Aside.*] Going!—going!—how she searches about for the pillow!

ROSELLE. Stephanian! pull off my shoes—untie my sash—now! now!—Where have you hidden the pillow?—I'm as sleepy to-night as a hedgehog.

NEPHON. And shall lie as hard. Hooh! what pig-iron creatures these mortals are! even the lightest o' the species! I should not like to be the miller, your father, pretty maiden, if all my sacks were so weighty.

[*Lays her upon the stone.*]

Now, ye malicious couple! spend your spite upon this. I have had a hint of your doings.

Like a mist
kist

By the matin ray,
 Or a shade
 frayed,
 Thus I wane away ! [Vanishes.

Enter GRUMIEL and MOMIEL.

MOMIEL. Ha ! here she lies.—Quick ! up with her, thou
 log !—

Let not the imp fry catch us.

GRUMIEL. Wasps !

MOMIEL. That blockhead !

He should have had no profit by success.

But, having served us, worn our livery still

Which he so hated : now shall he assume

What will dislike him more,—a brutish tail,

The most ridiculous badge to smooth mankind.

Thus prosper they who covenant with the fiends !

[*Exeunt, bearing off* ROSELLE.

Scene IV.

Upon a lark's back, safe and soft,
 Jaunty MORGANA sits aloft ;
 And, while the sun-bird fans and sings,
 Peeps through the lattice of his wings
 At all beneath : Her light attendant,
 OSMÉ, floats like a starry pendant,
 Beside the Queen ; to do her hest
 Where'er her majesty thinks best.

MORGANA. By this, I think, our host should be
 assembled.

Thou gav'st command to Nephon ?

OSMÉ. Madam, I did.

MORGANA. Where he should place his guards, and line
 our bounds

Securely, did'st thou ?

OSMÉ. Yes, so please Your Highness,

He would convene, too, on the level sward,

Minstrels and morris-dancers—

MORGANA. Foolish sprite !

We shall have other feats anon. Two fiends

Already have transgressed my flowery verge,

And borne a sleeping shepherdess away.
 Well, if no more : but, from yon woods I deem
 War, like a couchant lion, waits to spring
 At opportunity.—Flit down, and know
 What has been done: my breast is full of cares
 Both for my kingdom and my shepherd train.

OSMÉ. A fairy Iris, I will make my bow
 Of a bent sunbeam, and glide down as swift
 As minnow doth the waterfall.

[*Vanishes.*]

MORGANA. She lights !
 And bird-like wings into the woody Vale,
 Full of her errand. It is featly done.—
 Fall midway to the Earth, sweet Lark ! I pray.

The Scene closes.

Scene V.

Fair Lady, or sweet Sir, who look,
 Perchance, into this wayward book,
 Lay by your scenic eyes a moment ;
 It is not for a raree-show meant.
 I've now some higher work to do
 Than stipple graphic scenes for you.
 Suffice to say, that smother glade
 Kept greener by a deeper shade,
 Never by antler'd form was trod ;
 Never was strown by that white crowd
 Which nips with pettish haste the grass ;
 Never was lain upon by lass
 In harvest-time, when Love is tipsy,
 And steals to coverts like a gipsy,
 There to unmask his ruby face
 In unreprieved luxuriousness.
 'T is true, in brief, of this sweet place,
 What the tann'd Moon-bearer did feign
 Of one rich spot in his own Spain :
 The part just o'er it in the skies
 Is the true seat of Paradise.¹

Have you not oft, in the still wind,
 Heard sylvan notes of a strange kind,

¹ The Arabians seem by this oriental assertion to have estimated fully the value of their delicious moiety of Old Spain.

That rose one moment, and then fell
 Swooning away like a far knell?
 Listen!—that wave of perfume broke
 Into sea-music, as I spoke,
 Fainter than that which seems to roar
 On the moon's silver-sanded shore,
 When through the silence of the night
 Is heard the ebb and flow of light.
 O shut the eye, and ope the ear!
 Do you not hear, or think you hear,
 A wide hush o'er the woodland pass
 Like distant waving fields of grass?—
 Voices!—ho! ho!—a band is coming,
 Loud as ten thousand bees a-humming,
 Or ranks of little merry men
 Tromboning deeply from the glen,
 And now as if they changed, and rung
 Their citterns small, and riband-slung,
 Over their gallant shoulders hung!—
 A chant! a chant! that swoons and swells
 Like soft winds jangling meadow-bells;
 Now brave, as when in Flora's bower
 Gay Zephyr blows a trumpet flower;
 Now thrilling fine, and sharp, and clear,
 Like Dian's moonbeam dulcimer;
 But mixt with whoops, and infant-laughter,
 Shouts following one another after,
 As on a hearty holiday
 When Youth is flush, and full of May;
 Small shouts, indeed, as wild-bees knew
 Both how to hum, and hollo too.
 What! is the living meadow sown
 With dragon-teeth, as long ago?
 Or is an army on the plains
 Of this sweet clime, to fight with cranes?
 Helmet and hauberk, pike and lance,
 Gorget and glaive through the long grass glance;
 Red-men, and blue-men, and buff-men, small,
 Loud-mouth'd captains, and ensigns tall,
 Grenadiers, light-bobs, inch-people all,
 They come! they come! with martial blare
 Clearing a terrible path before;
 Ruffle the high-peak'd flags i' the wind,
 Mourn the long-answering trumpets behind,

Telling how deep the close files are—
Make way for the stalwart sons of war!
Hurrah! the buff-cheek'd bugle band,
Each with a loud reed in his hand!
Hurrah! the pattering company,
Each with a drum-bell at his knee!
Hurrah! the sash-capt cymbal swingers!
Hurrah! the klinge-klangle ringers!
Hurrah! hurrah! the elf-knights enter,
Each with his grasshopper at a canter!
His tough spear of a wild oat made,
His good sword of a grassy blade,
His buckram suit of shining laurel,
His shield of bark, emboss'd with coral;
See how the plummy champion keeps
His proud steed clambering on his hips,
With foaming jaw pinn'd to his breast,
Blood-rolling eyes, and arched crest;
Over his and his rider's head
A broad-sheet butterfly banner spread,
Swoops round the staff in varying form,
Flouts the soft breeze, but courts the storm.

Hard on the prancing heels of these
Come on the pigmy Thyades!
Mimics and mummers, masqueraders,
Soft flutists, and sweet serenaders
Guitarring o'er the level green,
Or tapping the parch'd tambourine,
As swaying to, and swaying fro,
Over the stooping flow'rs they go,
That laugh within their greeny breasts
To feel such light feet on their crests,
And ev'n themselves a-dancing seem
Under the weight that presses them.

But hark! the trumpet's royal clangour
Strikes silence with a voice of anger:
Raising its broad mouth to the sun
As he would bring Apollo down,
The in-back'd, swoln, elf-winder fills
With its great roar the fairy hills;
Each woodland tuft for terror shakes,
The field-mouse in her mansion quakes,
The heart-struck wren falls through the branches,
Wide stares the earwig on his haunches;

From trees which mortals take for flowers,
 Leaves of all hues fall off in showers ;
 So strong the blast, the voice so dread,
 'T would wake the very fairy dead !

Disparted now, half to each side,
 Athwart the curled moss they glide,
 Then wheel and front, to edge the scene,
 Leaving a spacious glade between ;
 With small round eyes that twinkle bright
 As moon-tears on the grass of night,
 They stand spectorial, anxious all,
 Like guests ranged down a dancing hall.
 Some graceful pair, or more, to see
 Winding along in melody.

Nor pine their little orbs in vain,
 For borne in with an oaten strain
 Three petty Graces, arm-entwined,
 Reel in the light curls of the wind ;
 Their flimsy pinions sprouted high
 Lift them half-dancing as they fly ;
 Like a bright wheel spun on its side
 The rapt three round their centre slide,
 And as their circling has no end
 Voice into sister voice they blend,
 Weaving a labyrinthian song
 Wild as the rings they trace along,
 A dizzy, tipsy roundelay,—
 Which I am not to sing, but they.

TRIO.

We the Sun's bright daughters be !
 As our golden wings may show ;
 Every land, and every sea,
 Echoes our sweet ho-ran ho !
 Round, and round, and round we go
 Singing our sweet ho-ran ho !

Over heath, and over hill,
 Ho-ran, hi-ran, ho-ran ho !
 At the wind's unruly will,
 Round, and round, and round we go.

Through the desert valley green,
 Ho-ran hi-ran, ho-ran ho !
 Lonely mountain-cliffs between,
 Round, and round, and round we go.

Into cave and into wood,
 Ho-ran, hi-ran, ho-ran ho !
 Light as bubbles down the flood,
 Round, and round, and round we go.

By the many tassell'd bowers,
 Ho-ran, hi-ran, ho-ran ho !
 Nimming precious bosom-flowers,
 Round, and round, and round we go.

Dimpling o'er the grassy meads,
 Ho-ran, hi-ran, ho-ran, ho !
 Shaking gems from jewell'd heads,
 Round, and round, and round we go.

After bee, and after gnat,
 Ho-ran, hi-ran, ho-ran ho !
 Hunting bird, and chasing bat,
 Round, and round, and round we go.

Unto North, and unto South,
 Ho-ran, hi-ran, ho-ran ho !
 In a trice to visit both,
 Round, and round, and round we go.

To the East, and to the West,
 Ho-ran, hi-ran, ho-ran ho !
 To the place that we love best,
 Round, and round, and round we go.

First Elve. Sweet ! sweet !
Second Elve. O how finely
 They do spark their feet !
Third Elve. Divinely !
 I can scarcely keep from dancing,
 'T is so wild a measure !
Fourth Elve. E'en the heavy steeds are prancing
 With uneasy pleasure !
Second Elve. Smooth the cadence of the music,
 Smooth as wind !

Fifth Elve. O me!—I'm dew-sick!—

All. Glutton! glutton! you've been drinking,
Till your very eyes are winking!

Fourth Elve. Put him to bed in that green tuft.

Second Elve. He should not have a bed so soft!

First Elve. Let him be toss'd into a thistle!

Third Elve. We'll tease his nose with barley-bristle!

Sixth Elve. Or paint his face with that ceruse
Which our fine bella-donnas use,
The sweet conserve of maiden-blushes.

First Elve. Or cage him in a crib of rushes;
There let him lie in verdant jail
Till he out-mourns the nightingale.

Fourth Elve. Sad thing! what shall become of thee,
When thy light nature wanes to something new?
Say'st thou, sad thing?—

Fifth Elve. O let me, let me be
A gliding minnow in a stream of dew!

Second Elve. The sot!

First Elve. The dolt!

Sixth Elve. The epicure!

'Twere wrong to call him else, I'm sure.

Each twilight-come,
At beetle-drum,
For nectar he a-hunting goes,
The twisted bine
He stoops for wine,
Or sups it fresh from off the rose.

In violet blue
He pokes for dew,
And gapes at Heaven for starry tears;
Till Phœbus laughs,
He crows and quaffs,
Frighting the lark with bacchant cheers.

From night to morn
His amber horn
He fills at every honey-fountain,
And draineth up
Each flowery cup
That brims with balm on mead or mountain.

- Second Elve.* Hi ! hi !
Fourth Elve. Whither ? whither ?
Second Elve. I must try
 To get that feather
 Floating near the stilly sun.
Fourth Elve. Now you have it, clap it on !
 What a gallant bonnet-plume,
 Ruby-black with golden bloom !
Second Elve. It must have belonged, I swear,
 To some gaudy bird of air ;
 One of the purple-crested team who fly
 With the Junonian curricule ;
 Or he that with rich breast, and tawny
 eye,
 Flames at the Sminthian chariot-wheel.
First Elve. But where is Nephon ? who can tell ?
Seventh Elve. How wondrous grand he's grown of late !
Eighth Elve. And walks so high ! and slaps his pate
 Ten times a moment, as the state
 Of Fairyland depended on him,
 Or tit-mice had agreed to crown him.
Third Elve. And takes such mighty airs upon him
 As I can witness : 'T was but now
 I challenged him to ride the bough,
 When pursing bigly—"Silly thou !
 Trouble me not" said he, and stalk'd
 As stiff as if a radish walk'd
 Past me, forsooth !
First Elve. He has not talk'd
 Of any body but himself
 This mortal day.
Second Elve. Conceited elf !
 Would he were bottled on a shelf !
 OSMÉ. Fay-ladies be not scandalous,
 Ah, speak not of poor Nephon thus !
Third Elve. Then wherefore should he sneer at us ?
Seventh Elve. He grows more haughty every day
 'Cause he's the queen's factotal fay,
 And scorns with other elves to play.
Fourth Elve. When will his Excellence appear ?
 OSMÉ. He sent a wild-dove messenger
 To bid us all assemble here.
 On the green glade ; for he had some
 Great work in hand.—

Seventh Elve. The saucy gnome!
 "Bid us," forsooth!
FLORETTA. I wish he'd come!
 I hear on distant heaths behind
 A hare-bell weeping to the wind,
 Unkind Floretta! ah, unkind,
 To leave me thus forsaken!

OSMÉ. I
 Will mount a crowback to the sky,
 Morgana waits for me on high.

[*Laughter without.*]

All. Hist! hist!

[*Without.*] Ha! ha! ha!

All. List! list!

[*Without.*] Ha! ha! ha!

All. In the noisy name of thunder
 What is all this rout, I wonder?

[*Without.*] Ha! ha! ha! ha!

Enter NEPHON with his lap full of flowers.

NEPHON. Lady and gentlemen fays, come buy!
 No pedlar has such a rich packet as I.

Who wants a gown
 Of purple fold,
 Embroidered down
 The seams with gold?
 See here!—a Tulip richly laced
 To please a royal fairy's taste!

Who wants a cap
 Of crimson grand?
 By great good hap
 I've one on hand:
 Look, sir!—a Cock's-comb, flowering red,
 'T is just the thing, sir, for your head!

Who wants a frock
 Of vestal hue?
 Or snowy smock?—
 Fair maid, do you?
 O me!—a Ladysmock so white!
 Your bosom's self is not more bright!

Who wants to sport
 A slender limb?
 I've every sort
 Of hose for him :
 Both scarlet, striped, and yellow ones :
 This Woodbine makes such pantaloons!

Who wants—(hush! hush!)
 A box of paint?
 'T will give a blush,
 Yet leave no taint :
 This Rose with natural rouge is fill'd,
 From its own dewy leaves distill'd.

Then lady and gentlemen fays, come buy !
 You never will meet such a merchant as I.

[*A sprig of broom falls at his feet.*]

NEPHON. Bow! wow!

FLORETTA. What is this,

With spikes and thorns, but not a leaf on?

NEPHON. By my fay! I think it is

A rod for Nephon.

Whe-e-e-w!

I shall be whipt, as sure as I

Stand here—Holla! you idle Elves!

Leap, skip, hop, jump, bounce, fly,

And range yourselves,

Obedient, till I lesson you

In what you have, each one, to do.

You, sir! you, sir! you, sir! you!

Knight, and squire, and stout soldado,

To your charge, good men and true,

We commit this happy meadow.

From yon dingle to that dell,

See no hostile foot profane it ;

And let minute-trumpets tell

How ye steadily maintain it.

Drums strike up, and clarions bray!

Ranks i' the rear take open order!

Left foot foremost! March away!

On by the Valley's midland border!

[*Exit, with the rest of the army.*]

ACT V.

Scene I.

UNCONSCIOUS ANDREA once more
 Passes the shadowy border o'er ;
 For though each opening glade, along
 The wild, war-blasted marches, throng
 With slow-paced elfin sentinels,
 Woe be to him who makes or mells,
 By word or deed, with man's condition
 But in the way of his commission !
 Ev'n to be heard or seen at all
 Is held a crime most capital ;
 And therefore comes it that so few
 Spirits have met our mortal view,
 Although such things beyond a doubt,
 Exist, if we could find them out.

ANDREA. 'T is with me, only out of the frying-pan into the fire : I live the life of a flying-fish : no sooner do I 'scape this shark than that cormorant pounces upon me ; when I dive for safety from the beak of the air-devil, I find the jaws of the water-devil most hospitably open to receive me.—Saint Bridget be my protector ! here come my old friends, the Moorish ambassadors !—just in the nick of time to give my speech a new proof and illustration !—Again, I say, miserable ! thrice miserable Ribobolo !—It is not two skips of the sun since thou wert on the point of being cut down like a flower of the field, in all the pride of thy beauty, and now, to crown thy ill-fortune, here are two devils come to possess thee.—Save ye, gentlemen !

Enter GRUMIEL and MOMIEL with ROSELLE.

MOMIEL. Ha ! ha ! thou scape-goat !—art thou caught again ?

Stir not a pace, but tremble where thou stand'st.

ANDREA. With all my might, sir !—I shake where I grow, as if I were about to turn into an aspen.

MOMIEL. See ! we have done thy duty, thou forsworn, Contemptible wretch ! This is the maiden-prize Thou should'st have brought us, and been man again.

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ANDREA. Lud-amercy! here is one of my mountain land-ladies! Mistress Roselle, as I'm a person, the miller's daughter!

MOMIEL. This?

ANDREA. This! aye this! I'll stake my ears on't!—Odso! Now that I call the matter to mind, Satan was guilty of her abduction: he gathered her and her sister as they were growing, posy-fashion, beside the mill-pond, to sweeten the air of his roaring kitchen. Where is t'other pullet? has he spitted her already?

GRUMIEL. Ha! ha! ha! here was a stratagem!

MOMIEL. Curse thee, vile oaf! Dost laugh at me? I'll tear thee!

GRUMIEL. Come on! I'll writhe about thee as a snake, And twist thy bones like gristle—

MOMIEL. Help! help, king!

ANDREA. Well done, my chickens! To 't, boys! Excellent! Five to one upon Spittfire!—At him, Snap-dragon! To 't!—Bravo!—Now if they would only eat each other up, after the precedent of the two cats in the saw-pit, 'twould be a *desideratum* much to desired.—Hilloah! are heaven, earth, and purgatory coming together?

ARARACH *descends amid thunder and lightning.*
Attendant Fiends.

ARARACH. Bunglers again!—Hurry them to the flames, As I commanded: Sweep them from my sight, Rebels! that serve their passions and not mine!

[*Exeunt fiends with GRUMIEL and MOMIEL.*

Myself, I find, though sore against my will,
Both chief and actor must be in their business.
Come hither, clown!—Take thy man-shape again,
See what thou ow'st my pity. Get thee gone!
There is thy road; 't will lead thee to thy friends,
Whom thou may'st hither fetch, if they will come,
To bear this maiden grave-ward. We'll depart!
See that yon corse burden not long our realm,
Or thou, and all thy rout, shall lie as cold!

[*Ascends.*

ANDREA. My stars! what a—phew! he has left after him: like the last sighs of ten thousand expiring candles. It is enough to smother all the hives in Sicily. Now if he would be only satisfied to live like a man of reputation, he might earn an honest livelihood by travelling as a sulphur-

merchant to the North (where, I am told, there is a great demand for that article), or by selling matches through the streets,—two bundles for a half-penny. But ods bobs! why do I stand here lecturing on commercial affairs when I don't know but his pestiferous majesty may descend in another cloud of such frankincense, and I shall be smoked to the flavour of Westphalia bacon? Well, if it were only from one feature in my face, *videlicet*, my tongue, I would even swear that I was the identical son of my mother!—Fly, Andrea, as fast as thy legs can carry thee! [*Exit.*]

ARARACH descends again.

ARARACH. Now let me use my skill. Thou sleeping earth,
Take thou the form of Sylvia, the May-Queen!
And lie there in that thicket, till one comes
Whom I would lime for a decoy, to bring
The bird I love about her. So!—'tis done!—

[*Ascends again.*]

The Scene closes.

Scene II.

Peasants, in simple conclave met,
Are round the wake-stone gravely set,
Perplexed to guess what chance befell
Their lost companion, young Roselle.

STEPHANIA. O sister! sister! what has become of you?
—I will never go home without you, if I were to seek a thousand years!—What should I say to my mother when she asked for her pretty Rose?

GERONYMO. Nay, weep not so heartily, I pray you: be not in such woful contrition. The case is not so bad, by a hundred miles, as you think it: for, look you now, it stands thus, or in other words, here 't is: you have lost your sister beyond recovery; good—

STEPHANIA. Begone, fickle-hearted turncoat!—If I could even forget your treachery, I am not in the mood now to hear such a prig discoursing.

GERONYMO. Why, very well, there 't is: I am a prig. Bear witness to that: she calls me—prig, and refuses to hear condolence.

First Peasant. Go to! you are ejected, and may wear the willow.

GERONYMO. No matter! 't is all very well! very well indeed!—I will hang myself some of these fine mornings, and then, mayhap, she will see what it is to wound the heart of a sensible-plant like me, by calling me a prig and turncoat. Cruel Mistress Stephania! I thought your soul was as tender as a chicken, but now I find it is harder than Adam's aunt or marble!

STEPHANIA. If you wish to soften it again, you will find out my sister. I can think of nothing else till she be discovered.

GERONYMO. Say no more, but put your trust in my zigacity. Above ground and beneath sky, I'll ferret her out, though she were hid in a blind nutshell.

Second Peasant. So, friend! whither are you going?

Enter ANDREA.

ANDREA. Indeed I cannot particularly say: but going I am!—I have taken up the trade of a water-wheel lately, and am always going! moreover betoken that, like it, I cannot get out of the pickle in which the malice of my enemies has placed me, but am continually soused over head and ears by a flood of misfortune. However, time cures all sorrows, and philosophy, the remainder.—Saw you any peasants about here? clowns, clodpates, *popolaccio*, dregs, that is to say, honest, foolish kind of persons?

Peasants. Why, I hope we be such: what else do you take us for?

ANDREA. By this light, now that I observe it, so ye are. Ye answer the description exactly: no hue-and-cry ever gave the dimensions of a banditti more precisely. Well; and wherefore in the dumps, my honest, foolish kind of neighbours?

GERONYMO. Why if it so please you, here 't is now—

ANDREA. This is a logicizer: you may always know a logicizer, by his laying down the law with his forefinger. Save thy invisible bellows, thou oracular fellow; I know all thou wouldst say, better than if there was a glass window in thy stomach. Ye are seeking for one of your lost lambs, my pastors?

Peasants. By the mass, so we are! He must be a witch, neighbours, to tell us this without knowing it.

ANDREA. Follow your noses, and I will undertake to lead you by them to where she is: I owe her as much gratitude as would fill a wine-flagon, pie-dish, brandy-flask, et cetera, nappercyhand, nappercyhand. She and her sister made a cramm'd fowl of me, I thank them. Indeed, if a stone could melt, I had poured out my heart at her feet, in expression of love and affliction. But this is irreverent! Come along: 't is not five-score yards beyond the bowsprits I have promised to tow ye by.

Peasants. Willingly, and thank you. [*Exeunt.*]

Scene changes to another part of the Glen.

Enter ANDREA and the Peasants.

ANDREA. There! in that thicket, that bramble-bush; if your eyes be not scratched out by leaping into it, you will see her there.

Peasants. Well, come with us, and show it more catallucully.

ANDREA. Ay, to be sure I will!—Go on; I'll be whipper-in of your whole pack. Proceed, I tell ye! it is all before you, as a pedlar carries his knapsack.

Peasants. Lead away, then!

ANDREA. Right; you are in the very track of it: I shall cry out "roast-beef!" when you are about to tumble upon her.

Peasants. Good! Proceed, Geronymo. Our guide will come after us.

ANDREA. O, doleful! woful! racks! torments! thumb-screws!—O my great toe! my great toe!

Peasants. What is the matter?

ANDREA. My great toe, I say!—O, now are the sins of my ancestors coming against me!—The gout! the gout!—I cannot stir an inch farther, if I got the bribe of a secretary!—Go on, go on: if you stay here making mouths at my foot it will only grow the more angry.

Peasants. Well, remain here for us, while we search the bushes.

ANDREA. Speed ye; neighbours!—Hark'ee!

Peasants. What?

ANDREA. Ye will be here when ye come back, eh?

Peasants. Ay, certainly.

ANDREA. Why then, meantime, I will put my foot in a sling, and prepare to hop off with ye. Good-bye!—Oo!

such a twinge! as if the fiend's claw and my foot struck a bargain for ever! Oo!

Peasants. On, folks! on!—He must be sorely afflicted to make such a piteous howling, and such heinously ill-favoured grimaces. How he lolls his tongue out at us, like a mad dog! We are well rid of him. [*Exeunt.*]

ANDREA. 'Slife! why was I not a politician? a Machiavelian?—I would overreach his Spanish majesty himself, who, they tell me, is the very flower of dissimulation, the pink of hypocrisy.—Those empty-pates! those human ostriches! that run their heads into a bush and think themselves hidden from danger, because it is hidden from them!—I know more of jurisprudence than to play at blind-man's buff with Mephistopheles and his convent of Black Friars. Well, he may enlist them all under his pitchy ensign, but he shall not have me for a fugue-man. I will rather be a fugitive! [*Exit.*]

Scene III.

Tell me, young Prophetess! that now
Lean'st o'er my arm, thine anxious brow,
The while my cheek delighted feels
Thy rolling curls, like little wheels
Course up and down that swarthy plain,—
Tell me, young Seer! I say again,
What does my flying pencil trace
To tinge with doubtful bloom thy face?
Why should thy breast suspicious heave?
What doth thy glistening eye perceive?
Can thy shrewd innocence divine
The mystery of this sketch of mine?

Two graceful forms beneath a shade
Through its green drapery half survey'd:
An arm stolen round a slender waist,
Lips to a white hand gently prest;
A manly brow that wants not much
An alabaster one to touch,
'Neath it pure-flushing; in repose
Laid, almost like a fainting rose,
That turns her with a secret sigh
To some boy Zephyr whispering nigh,
And in his airy breast doth seek
To hide her deeply-blushing cheek,

Or, lest she swoon, reclineth there
Her red cheek on his scented hair.

Half-smiling Maiden! whose pink breast

Peeps like the ruddock's o'er its nest,

Or moss-bud from its peaked vest,

What to thy simple thinking is

Th' interpretation of all this?

I'll tell thee, if thou say'st amiss :

A youthful pair, met in a grove,

Arm-intertwined : What should this prove?—

Maiden. "I think it must be—Love!"

ROMANZO and SYLVIA.

ROMANZO. After the Night how lovely springs the Morn !

After the shower how freshly blooms the green !

After the clouds and tempest of our fate,

How sweetly breaks the beauty of the sky,

And hangs its rainbow ev'n amid our tears !—

Now Mercy joins us in her circling arms,

And, like a beauteous mother, wishes us

All joy that can betide!—Is not her blessing

Already come upon us? Is not this

Perfect beatitude?

SYLVIA. O, but I fear

It will not last for ever!—'T is too sweet.

ROMANZO. What should Heaven find in either of us two

That should provoke its shaft?—No! we will live,

Bosom to bosom thus, like harmless doves,

And so be spared for our great innocence!—

Look up and smile!

SYLVIA. Nay, I am of thy mind—

Ecstasy is too deeply-soul'd to smile.

I am more near to weep; but such fond tears

As flow'rets, ill-intreated of the night,

Shed, when the morn-winds sing i' the Eastern gate

That father Sun doth rise.

ROMANZO. Is not this love

A happy thing? a fountain of new life,

Another urn of blood within the heart

That floods the ebbing veins; and teems new life

Through all those ruby channels?—Oh, it is

Warmest of bosom-friends!—Joy'st not to feel

This downy bird rustle within thy arms,

Choosing his fragrant bed; as fond as he,

The nectar-bibbing fly, who doth disturb,
With most uxorious care, yon rose, the while
He settles in her breast?

SYLVIA.

Is Love a bird?

ROMANZO. A boy!—with curls of crisped gold, like
thine:

Lips like the fresh sea-coral: in his cheek
The sleepless Laughter cradles; and above
Perpetual Sport rides in his humorous eye.
This guest of man hath to his use beside
A quiver, and light arrows, and a bow;
With which he stings his votaries' willing hearts,
Aiming from beauty's hills, or vantage-ground,
Where he can light: then flies (for pinions he
Fleeces the wand'ring gossamer) to tend
The wounds his bolt hath made; and often there,
Like a good surgeon, pillows till they heal,
Or sweetly cruel makes them bleed again.
This is Love's picture; and his page of life
Writ in Time's chronicle.

SYLVIA.

Sure it must be

A marvellous child!

ROMANZO.

O, 't is a winsome boy!

And tells such pleasant tales, and sings such songs,
With harp gay-tinkling like a Troubadour,
That icy nuns through charitable grates
Thrust forth their lovely arms to pamper him;
And so he often wounds them, while they leave
Their bosoms undefended.

SYLVIA.

I would hear

Some of his minstrelsy.

ROMANZO.

Why so thou hast:

He speaks through various lips; even now through mine.

SYLVIA. Ah! thou deceiv'st me: thou art he! but clothed
In shape more godlike.

ROMANZO.

No! his deputy,

Teaching thee his pure doctrine, and sweet truths.
How wilt thou e'er repay me? O, will all
Thy heart be half enough, for making thee
So wise a scholar in this book of joy?

I've taught thee Love's sweet lesson o'er,
A task that is not learn'd with tears:
Was Sylvia e'er so blest before

In her wild, solitary years?

Then what does he deserve, the Youth,
Who made her con so dear a truth!

Till now in silent vales to roam,
Singing vain songs to heedless flowers,
Or watch the dashing billows foam,
Amid thy lonely myrtle bowers,
To weave light crowns of various hue,—
Were all the joys thy bosom knew.

The wild bird, though most musical,
Could not to thy sweet plaint reply;
The streamlet, and the waterfall,
Could only weep when thou did'st sigh!
Thou could'st not change one dulcet word
Either with billow, or with bird.

For leaves, and flowers, but these alone,
Winds have a soft discoursing way;
Heav'n's starry talk is all its own,—
It dies in thunder far away.
E'en when thou would'st the Moon beguile
To speak,—she only deigns to smile!

Now, birds and winds, be churlish still,
Ye waters keep your sullen roar,
Stars be as distant as ye will,—
Sylvia need court ye now no more:
In Love there is society
She never yet could find with ye!

“Then what does he deserve, the Youth?”—
Might he but touch that moist and rubious lip,
Ev'n Dian could not frown!—the wind-kist rose
Is not less pure because she's bountiful
When Zephyr woos her chastely. Be thou, then,
Who art as fair, as kind!— [Kisses her.

O!—O! a kiss!

Sweeter than May-dew to the thirsty flower,
Or to Jove's half-clung bird, his clamorous food
From minist'ring Hebe's hand!—

SYLVIA. Would it were sweeter,
For thy sake, than it is!—We are betroth'd,

And so I hold my petty treasures thine,
My lord and husband.

ROMANZO. Therefore in their use
I will be frugal, since thou 'rt generous.—

SYLVIA. Hark! hark! a cry!—

ROMANZO. Fear not!—thou 'rt in my arms.

ANDREA *without*.

Alas! alas!—Help! help!—Do I live amongst Saracens
or Turkies?—No pity? no assistance!—The good dame!
the excellent old lady! Kidnap! transposed! elevated!—
She who saved me from that mad-pated fellow my master!

SYLVIA. My mother!

ROMANZO. What's this ruffian hurly? Speak!

Enter ANDREA.

Help, I say!—Rescue! rescue!—If ye have hearts the
size of queen-cakes, let your swords leap from your scab-
bards, and cut down these *sans-culottes*! these Carbonari!
sons of the Black Prince! whelps of Belzebub!—O Master!
Master! turn away the eyes of your wrath from me upon
those dingy freebooters!—Lamentable! O lamentable!
lamentable!

ROMANZO. Speak! Who?—who?—

SYLVIA.

If thou hast pity, speak!

ANDREA. Pity!—Am I not weeping my eyes out?—
What can I do more?—Are either of ye half as pitiful a
fellow?—Do I stand nonchanically here like a statue, as if
I were gaping for bob-cherries, or had set my mouth for a
fly-trap?—Pity, indeed!—Am I not shouting, ranting, and
calling down vengeance upon the heads of these nefarious
woman-stealers as fast as tiles in a storm? What call you
this but pity?—active, stirring, practical,—I say, practical
pity?—Oons! I should have been president of some
humane society, or an overseer of the poor, at the least,
had I remained turnspit to the Sardinian ambassador in
England.

SYLVIA. Agony chokes me!—O I shall go mad!

ROMANZO. Dastardly hound! I'll shake thy story out
of thee!

ANDREA. Pray do not; it would discompose me much in
the telling of it, I assure you. Mark me now—"Here 't is!"
as neighbour Geronymo says; or thus it stands, or this is

the tot of the matter. We proceeded on our excursion, or incursion (to speak critically, for we were about to enter the preserve of a Nabob, though, indeed, we had a special licence from his diabolical lordship)—Well!—Take your knuckles off my throat, I beseech you, sir; my words come out *pip! pip!* like bullets from a potgun. Well—as I was saying—the peasants and I, or, in other words, I and the peasants, which you will,—proceeded on our progress to seek for young Mrs. Roselle, the miller's daughter, in the wood, just there, over your worship's nose, where the grass is so parched and thin, it would hardly fodder a goose. Well! so far, so good—A little more vent, if you please, sir! I shall never run out else. Well!—When we had come thither. lo and behold ye! no Mrs. Roselle; not the print of her shoe upon the moss, though she wore beechen ones an inch thick, and clouted from heel to toe with sixpenny hobnails. Well!—no maid o' the mill, as I told ye, was to be found there, but in her stead the shapes and figures of one Mrs. Sylvia, as the peasants entitled her: some country-hoyden, I surmise, that purls a little through an oaten pipe, and infests these parts in a sheep-keeping character,—a “dear Pastora,” as one might say, a Mrs. Simplicity—O! your worship! do not tuck that thumb so inexorably under my gizzard as if you were nailing up wall-fruit—You spoil my story!

ROMANZO. Would I could strangle thee, and hear thee after!

ANDREA. Why, indeed, hanging is almost too good a death for an informer; but it is considered more politic to reward him. However, to proceed as we went on: I being foremost, that is foremost in the rear, I *debouche* towards dame Agatha, who, indeed, was coming by hasty marches to warn us of some danger, and I communicate to her my intelligence.—

ROMANZO. Well?—What did she?—what?—what?—speak it!

ANDREA. Fell all off a heap like a haycock, your worship; and thereupon darted immediately into the wood as if her heels were loaded with quicksilver; from thence bolted into the arms of a couple of Black Hussars, who carried her off to perdition. And so, if they don't live happy, I hope—

SYLVIA. Fly, fly, and save her!—O your mercy, Heavens!

[Swoons.]

ROMANZO. Hear me, thou villain!—On thy hopes of life, Here and hereafter, guard this lovely one,

Sustain, restore, and tend her, while hard fate
Keeps me from that dear office,—or as sure
As lightning blasts thy doom is fixt.—

[*Exit.*

ANDREA. Indeed, so it appears: to be ever surrounded and o'erwhelm'd by innumerable and indescribable miseries and mischances, accidents and offences, dreadful calamities and singular occurrences!—They come as thick upon me as if they were showered from a dredging-box! I am powdered with sorrows and afflictions! Salted, peppered, pickled! roasted, basted, stewed, fried, crimped, scarified, tossed like a pancake, and beaten like a batter, upon all occasions! Finally, I have been cooked up into a devil, and may perhaps be buried alive in a minced-pie to be served up at a Christmas-feast among the Cannibals. Nevertheless, I will endeavour to revive this lovely maiden according to the prescriptions of Galen and Hippocrypha—

[*Raises SYLVIA in his arms.*

Truly, my adventures follow one another with marvellous dexterity: if they were only printed I might string them together like ballads, and sell them by the yard as they do popular songs, or Bologna sausages: I should have every mob-cap in the neighbourhood peeping out of the attics, and have copper jingling about me as if I were playing the triangle,—could I only bring myself to chant my own deeds for remuneration.—Here now am I, without ever having studied more of the Healing Art than a farrier's dog,—here am I installed as physician-general of this uninhabited district, and condemned under the penalty of bastinado and carbonization, to raise this mortal from the dead, as if I had invented a universal restorative!—'Sbodikins! it is too much! were my shoulders as broad as Mount Hatless, I could not long bear this load of negotiations that is laid upon them!—If I were anything less than the most tender-hearted Samaritan in all Christendom, I would leave this pretty faint-away here to get well as she could, by the study of "Every man his own physician," and take to my heels like a dancing bear when I am threatened with such a flagellation. But no matter!—the heart of man was made for misfortune as an ass's back for a packsaddle. We must all be stocks and philosophers!—I'll run for a capful of the limpid, to baptize her.

[*Exit.*

Scene closes.

Scene IV.

Slowly as Twilight lifts her veil
 To show her wint'ry forehead pale
 Unto the froze Antarctic world,
 A lurid curtain is upfurled,
 Disclosing the huge pedestals
 That prop the necromantic walls;
 But still so heavily it looms,
 Clouds under clouds with volumy wombs,
 That scarce it seems indeed to rise,
 Too ponderous for the fleecy skies.
 At length, by inch and inch, appear
 The portals of the Sorcerer;
 And yawning like a charnel-gate
 Ope to admit a corse of state,
 The bossy valves scream as they swing
 On brazen hinge, scarce opening
 Their slothful jaws for their own king.

Enter ARARACH and fiends with ROMANZO prisoner.

ARARACH. Enter before us!—

I will not have him torn with thongs, nor pierced
 With barbed instruments; nor pincht, nor cramp't;
 These are but laughing pains to such wild tortures
 As I'll afflict him with: he shall not bellow
 His furnace pains shut in an ox of brass,
 Like him whose craft was proved upon himself;
 Nor shall his lopt or lengthen'd form be stretch'd
 On iron bed, accommodately fill'd
 By every guest, pygmy, or stout, or tall.
 Trite code of agonies! that writhe the frame
 But hardly wring the mind. Peasants who have
 Their feelings in their flesh, and none more inward,
 Shrink at the bloody pincers: but high natures
 Who feel not in their clay, despise all pangs
 That reach no deeper.—I will plague him there!
 In a refined, imaginative way;
 And work upon his sensibility,
 Not on his senses, which he'd reck as much
 As the wild Indian at the stake, or he
 Who burnt his hand for bravery.—What ho!
 Is the stage rear'd?

Fiend.

Dismiel, the machinist,

Is hard about it, lord : you hear the clang,
 And music of his anvil, which doth sing
 At every stroke, like a cathedral bell,
 And every iron tingles in the hand
 Of his accomplices.

ARARACH. Go ! quicken him
 With a few stings i' the elbow.—And thou, too,
 See if my quaint device go smoothly off,
 Ere the Phantasma pass before his eyes,
 Whom we would entertain with feats and shows
 As such a guest deserves. If one particular
 Fail in the presentation, even by chance,
 I 'll hold thee punishable : Mark it well !
[Exit. The Friends vanish.]

Scene V.

A winding walk of moss, between
 Two hedge-rows of sweet aubepine,
 With English White-thorn, much the same
 Both shrub and its Provencal name.
 Yet still I think our homely word
 Is much,—ay much !—to be preferr'd,—
 Except it more convenient be
 In rhyme, as it was now to me.
 I love this-racy northern Land,
 And think its tongue both sweet and grand,
 Though mongrel authors may abuse it,
 Because they know not how to use it.
 Green Albion, shake him from thy breast,
 The renegade ! who thinks not best
 Both thee, and thine, of all the sun
 Looks with his golden eye upon !
 As she who gave us human birth
 Is dear,—why not our parent-earth ?
 Shallow pronouncers may call this
 Poorness of soul, and prejudice ;
 Why then, 't is weak to love our mothers
 Better, one whit, than those of others !
 If this philosophy be sound,
 By no one tie is nature bound ;
 We have free warrant to disclaim
 All laws of kindred, blood, and name,

Like Spanish kings, despite of taunts,
 Marry our nieces or our aunts,
 And by the same licentious rule
 Tell our grave father he's a fool,
 Scoundrel, or liar,—call him out,
 Or cuff him in a fistic bout,
 Owing no more in such a case
 Than bankers do to Henry Hase;
 All home-affections are absurd,
 And duty is an old-wife's word:
 Who feels a brave indifference
 For natural bond, or natural sense,
 Is, in our modern Teucer's sight,
 The only true Cosmopolite!

No more! no more!—I neither can,
 Nor would I, write—"Essays on Man";
 Here are some Maidens to assay,
 A matter much more in my way:
 With yon sweet Girl I'd rather speak
 Than him the Academic Greek;
 Or wander with this pensive maid,
 Than Tully in his classic shade;
 One smile from those dear lips, I vow,
 Sylvia! would make me happy now!
 For I do fear some inward ail,
 Thou look'st so deadly still, and pale.
 O grief! what can it—can it be?
 Is there no end to Misery?

*Enter SYLVIA, STEPHANIA, ROSELLE, JACINTHA, and
 Peasant-girls following.*

STEPHANIA. Alas! alas! she is distract—

JACINTHA. Ay, truly: you may know it by her hands
 locked so; and her streaming hair; and her eye fixed upon
 the ground as if she were choosing her steps over a bridge
 not a hair's breadth. O, it is a piteous condition!

ROSELLE. Sweet Sylvia! Gentle maid!—Go not, we
 pr'ythee, towards that haunted wood: do not, we beseech
 thee!—She looks at me, but speaks not—O her eyes! her
 eyes!

Girls. Go not, our queen! our beauteous sovereign!—
 We will kneel to thee, if thou wilt stay.

STEPHANIA. 'T is vain!—she heeds us not.

Third Girl. She seemed to love Jacintha, because she could talk more gentlefolk than we : let Jacintha pray her not to go.

JACINTHA. [*Embracing SYLVIA.*] O gentle friend ! by this entreating and affectionate kiss—

SYLVIA. No comfort ! no !—they are ta'en ! they are ta'en !

JACINTHA. I but offend her.

SYLVIA. Is he not dead, answer me that ?—Is not my mother ta'en ?—Why trouble ye me thus ?—Forgive, but leave me !—

JACINTHA. Sweetness, even in her moods and wilfulness.

Girls. Let us fall down about her on our knees.

SYLVIA. Prevent me not, I say !—I will proceed !

[*Exit.*]

Peasants. 'T will make her fractious : She will go. Let us follow her to the extent we dare, and persuade her back if possible.

[*Exeunt after SYLVIA.*]

Scene VI.

In murky dungeon round and wide
And coped with clouds from side to side,
Behold a wild, dishevelled form
With eyes like stars in winter storm,
Athwart whose flashing light the rack
Scuds in long wreaths of massy black ;
Behold this form, once noble, and
Even in its mute distraction grand :
Its breast heaves with enormous ire,
Its very nostril teems with fire ;
Its clenched hands are tossing high,
And seem to threat the lowering sky ;
Brain-pierced, heart-stung, and mad as foam,
It paces the infernal dome,
Like an indignant God of Wind
To cloister'd mountain-cave confined.

In guise so fierce who could discover
Sylvia's once kind and gentle lover ?
But cast your wondering eyes above,
And see within a proud alcove
Two figures seated : this one bears
A crown and sceptre ; this appears

A shepherdess : the monarch, he
 Toys with her wanton curls, and she
 Repays the courtship of her tresses
 With amorous looks, and light caresses.
 This is the mystic cause, I ween,
 Of all our Youth's distracted mien,
 'T he Phantom revelry deceives
 His visual sense ; and he believes
 Sylvia doth here a recreant prove
 To Faith, to Purity, and Love.

What outward grief, what corporal pain,
 Could touch a lover's heart and brain
 Like this sharp visionary wo
 That wings the tortured fancy so ?
 Then, shall we blame the sufferer ?—No !
 High though the waves of passion brim,
 Pardon we must, and pity him.

ROMANZO. Endure ! O heart ! endure !—
 O strings of passion, break not !—Hold but firm
 Till I have scaled this iron tomb : burst then,
 Fountain of life, and let me choke with blood !—
 Thou fair iniquity ! I'll reach thy locks,
 And strangle thee in their twisted goldenness !—
 Might, double-thew my limbs ! Knot the great sinews,
 That my tough, boughy arms curl with their strength,
 Like the prodigious elm : I would pull down
 To dust these riotous lovers !—Foul abortion !—
 I will—O words !—For thee, young treachery !
 Beautiful sin ! fair hypocrite ! I'll paint
 Thy cheek a bloodier hue !—O is this earth
 Limed to retain me ?—Though my feet do move,
 Weights, huge as millstones, seem to clog their steps,
 Locking me to this gaol—Torture of sight !
 What ! wilt thou wind thy passionate arms about him ?—
 Kiss him not, wanton !

Phantom of ARARACH. Fairer than fair !

Phantom of SYLVIA.

Sweet king !

ROMANZO. O scorpion words !—Vile pair !—Must I yet
 storm

Like the fixt oak with idly-threatening arms,
 Uttering loud tempest-talk, swung with blind rage,
 But spur-bound to a spot ?

Phantom of SYLVIA. Look, here's a wreath :
[*To the Phantom-king.*

I'll twist it round thy brow.

ROMANZO. Cruel! oh cruel!

That was my crown! my garland!

Phantom of ARARACH. Come and claim it.

Knock off his miry fetters there!

Phantom of SYLVIA. Poor fool!

ROMANZO. Vengeance! I'm free!—Now, you luxurious pair,

Have at your hot alcove!—In war, in war

I've leap'd a battlement Alp-high to this.

Phantom of ARARACH. Work up! work up!—Dismiel,
thou art too slow!

ROMANZO. Ha, what is this?—O grief!—the dungeon
sides

Arise like murky clouds at thunder-call,

Hanging a rocky ciel above my head,

Ready to crush me if I breathe!—

Phantom of ARARACH. Let down,

Let down our shafted stairs!—Mount, worshipper!

Thine eyes must ache with lowly adoration.

Courage, and kneel our throne!

[*A golden staircase is let down.*

ROMANZO. Where lead these steps?—

Or how do they come here?—Ah! Pity stoops

Half out of Heaven, and to her bracelet links

This stair, that I on earth may groan no more,

But creep along her arm into her bosom,

And, like a hurt babe in its mother's breast,

Lament myself to peace!

Phantom of SYLVIA. Sir bridegroom, come!

We can not tarry longer for thy torch

To light us bedward.

Phantom of ARARACH. Raise the nuptial song!

Music may draw him, though our love do not.

ROMANZO. Am I spell-stricken, now?—Now are my feet

Riveted! bolted! chained! that I forbear

To mount to my revenge?—Hold fast! hold fast,

Ye silver-clouted stars!—Afford me still

This pendulous step-inviter to your sphere,

I'll up as swift as soaring Victory

To clap at Heaven-gate her triumphant wings!—

I come! I come! [*As he approaches, the steps fade away.*

'Sdeath! do mine eyes melt at the flaming gold?

[*Phantoms of ARARACH and SYLVIA. Ha! ha!—the rainbow-grasper weeps to see*

His vision—air!

ROMANZO. Justice! justice, ye gods!

Is this your equity? [*The stair vanishes entirely.*

I'll pray no more

The absent Powers. Justice long since, now Hope,

Ev'n Hope, hath left this planet!—Blank Despair,

Thou only dost abide!—Lend me a sword;

'T is all I crave, and what thou lov'st to proffer:

A sword, kind deity of the miserable!

Let fall a sword, and I will swear thy name

Sweeter than Mercy's to the wretch in dread

Of everlasting pain! [*A sword falls upon the ground.*

Thanks!—Now farewell,

Earth, and its woes for ever!

[*Phantoms of ARARACH and SYLVIA. Ha! ha! ha!*

[*Laughter above.*

ROMANZO. Nay, let me pause!

There's something dread and horrid in that joy!—

'T is said the fiends laugh where the angels weep:—

I will not do 't!—O all-disposing Heaven,

Pour down thy sorrows as thou wilt, I'll drink them

In patience, though in tears!

Phantoms of ARARACH and SYLVIA. Ill done! O rage!

[*Murmurs above.*

ROMANZO. Now may I know Heaven smiles upon my deed,

For Hell is most unhappy.

Phantoms of ARARACH and SYLVIA. Let's provoke him!

[*The Canopy, with the Phantom-lovers, descends.*

Phantom of ARARACH. Behold!

Phantom of SYLVIA. Thy rival! O behold!

Phantom of ARARACH.

Thy love!

ROMANZO. To death and darkness, with one lightning-sweep

Of this blue thunderbolt!

[*His sword divides the Canopy, which vanishes with the Phantoms, displaying the Enchanted Vale and SYLVIA beside her lover.*

SYLVIA. [*Leaping to his bosom.*] My life! my lord!—

Take me into thine arms! take me!—

ROMANZO.

Avaunt!

By what reed nature dost thou only bow
Beneath my stormy hand? Dares thy slight insolence
Brave me again?

SYLVIA. Nay, I will kneel for death,
So my lord wills it! [Kneels.

ROMANZO. Good! O art o' the sex!
How well she does it!

SYLVIA. Come! I'll bind mine eyes,
Or cast them on the ground, lest their fond looks
Persuade thee into pity. I would die!
In sooth, I would! now I have lost thy love.

ROMANZO. Perfidiousness!—

SYLVIA. Kill me! O kill me first!
And name me after!—Let me die believing
I am thy dear-one still—the simple thought
Would make me kiss the weapon. Gentle love!
One agony—one agony! Kill me not twice,
With sorrow, and the sword!

ROMANZO. Were I not staunch
As Murder, I would melt at this!—Wilt strive?
Wilt talk? Wilt question with me?

SYLVIA. I will be dumb—
I'll cross my patient hands upon my breast,
And wait my death as meek as the poor lily
Whose head falls smiling at her slayer's feet.
Or I will clasp thy knees,—thus—thus! And if
Tears through my blinding hair will come at all,
'T is for thy misery when I am slain.
Now! while I kiss thy gentler hand—

ROMANZO. Thus then, [Raising his sword.
Die! die, thou traitress—Now, by heavens, she clings,
Clings to me like a babe!—Whate'er she be,
O God! how pitiful are woman's tears!

SYLVIA. No!—No!—they are not for myself!—

ROMANZO. Go, wretch!
That seem'st so innocent, but art not,—go!
I cannot murder thee: 't is like infanticide!

SYLVIA. Where shall I go?—wretch as I am!

ROMANZO. I care not!—
Anywhere—anywhere!—so it be from me!
Go to thy paramour; thy sceptred love;
Thy demon wooer; whom my sword dispersed,
But slew not: him thou didst caress but now—
SYLVIA. Him? him? the Sorcerer?

ROMANZO.

Ay, thou false one! ay!

With cheeks as flagrant as the sun's in June,
 Smiles broad and liberal as she bestows
 Whose blush is wine-engender'd; with such hands
 As smoothe the unshorn Satyr when he loves,
 Or weave his drunken crowns!—Follow him, go!
 He'll perk thee by his side, I dare be sworn,
 On his mock throne; call thee his florid queen;
 While roars that bring down all the vaulted clouds
 To quench the clamor, shall proclaim your title
 As wide as Shame can hollo! After him, go!

SYLVIA. 'T is a most hideous dream!—Would I had
 waken'd!

ROMANZO. For me,—O that some violent bolt would fall,
 And make me ashes!—some oak-bending storm
 Lap me in its wild skirt, and swirl me down
 Precipices footed in the raging waves
 Where thunder learns to bellow; where leviathan
 Tosses his foam abroad, and to the sands
 Sucks down the shrieking mariner! plunged there,
 Ten thousand fathoms deep amid the billows,
 I would find out an ever-stunning grave
 Where voice of man could never hail me more!
 O my brain seethes with fire!—Death! death! O death!

[Exit.

[SYLVIA retires, and sits down beside a rock with her head
 leaning against it.

SYLVIA. “Wretch!”—“False-one!”—“Precipices!”
 —“Grave!”—“Death! death!”—

What is all this?—O, I am crazed! I'm crazed!—
 Mother!—Romanzo!—help me!—Fool! Fool! silence!—
 Ha! ha! ha! ha!—No; I'll not laugh; I'll sing.
 “I've taught thee Love's sweet lesson o'er,

A task that is not learn'd by tears:

Was Sylvia e'er so blest before

In her wild, solitary years?

Then what does he deserve, the Youth,

Who made her con so dear a truth?”

Why, the key to her happiness, that he may rob her of it,
 and begone; leaving her to live on her scholarship. Ah,
 deceiver!

“Pearly brow, and golden hair,
Lips that seem to scent the air ;
Eyes as bright”—

O yes, indeed !

“Eyes as bright, and sweet, and blue,
As violets”—

“Violets !” what next ? Pah ! I forget—“violets !”—

“Eyes as bright, and sweet, and blue,
As violets, weeping tears of dew !”—

I have no better words : but they go pat enough ; and would be sweet, sweet indeed, could the flower sigh them over my grave !—O that it were bed-time ! I am a-weary of this sun ; and long to sleep beneath the fresh-green turf, with a sweet-briar at my head to entice the nightingale, and a streamlet at my foot to join in the lullaby.

Lullaby ! lullaby ! there she sleeps,
With a wild streamlet to murmur around her !
Lullaby ! lullaby ! still it keeps
That the pale creature may slumber the sounder !

Lullaby ! lullaby ! wake no mo !
Says the sweet nightingale toning above her :
Lullaby ! lullaby ! life is wo
When a poor maiden is left by her lover !

At least if all maidens be like me !—and pray Heaven, I die ere night of this thorn in my bosom !

They told him that his love was dead,
And slept beneath a willow ;
He turned him on his heel, and said,—
“She chose a roomy pillow !”

So she wept till the very shroud was moist with her tears ! Oh, what a kind shepherd ! Would I had such another !—But no ! Who thinks of Sylvia ?—Not even Sylvia, though she is beside herself ! ha ! ha ! ha !—the first jest I ever made in my life, and, without another, it is a most miserable one !—Indeed, indeed, I am not very happy, though I do sing. Where did I end ?

Enter FLORETTA behind.

FLORETTA. O happy sight ! O happy hour !
I've found my beauteous lady-flower !
Arise, arise, and come with me,
Thou'rt in the realm of perfidy.

SYLVIA. Ay, that's true ; it rhymed to *me*—

They told him that his love was laid
Beneath a sullen cypress tree :
Smiling, quoth he, "The silly Maid,
They say she died for love of me!"

There was a swain for you!—ha ! ha ! ha ! ha !

FLORETTA. Oh, see my tears ! Oh, hear my cries !
My love ! my beauty ! rise ! arise !
Sit not, I pray thee, chanting there
Wild ditties to the ruthless air.
Like the lost Genius of Despair !
Two fiends are hither winging fast
To seize my lovely-one at last.
Sylvia !—Dost hear me?—

SYLVIA. Bird !

FLORETTA. O come !

Return to thy forgotten home !
Hear ye not how the valleys mourn—
"When will our Shepherdess return ?"
Return ! return ! the rocks of gray
And murmuring streams and hollows say !

SYLVIA. Ay, when I have sung my song, indeed !
—when I have sung my song !

Was Lubin not a generous swain
To give his love her heart again ?
He sent her back the sweet love-token
The heart ;—but then indeed—'t was broken !

What does your fairy-hood say to that?—Do your little
goodies spin thread fine and strong enough to bind up a
broken heart?—If so I will buy it of them for a silver penny
cut out of the moon. Bear them my offer ; I will sing here
till you come back.

FLORETTA.

Ah, stay not ! stay not ! lily mine !
 Come o'er, come o'er the demon line !
 One moment, and the line is crost !
 One moment, and my flower is lost !—
 Wilt thou not listen to my wo ?
 Would I neglect my Sylvia so ?
 Once when I was thy favourite ouphe
 Thou could'st not pet me half enough ;
 But now to any nook I may,
 And weep myself to dew away !—
 Ah ! thou wilt come !—in faith thou must !—
 I 'll strew thy path with petal-dust,
 And brush thy soft cheek with my wing,
 As round thee merrily I sing
 A gay, light-tripping, frolic song,
 To lure thy charmed steps along.

My Lady sweet ! O come with me
 To where the springs of nectar flow,
 And like a cunning cuckoo-bee¹
 Before thee, I will singing go,
 With *cheer ! cheer ! cheer !*
 When flowery beds or banks appear.

I 'll lead thee where the festal bees
 Quaff their wild stores of crusted wine,
 From censers sweet, and chalices
 With lips almost as red as thine.
 And *cheer ! cheer ! cheer !*
 I 'll cry when such a feast is near.

Sylvia ! O hapless maiden ! Come !

To fairer scenes and brighter bowers
 Than bloom in all the world beside,
 Where thou shalt pass Elysian hours,—

¹ The Moroc, *Cuculus Indicator*, Cuckoo-bee, or Honey-guide, is a little bird of the African deserts, gifted with a most peculiar tact for discovering the nests of wild bees, and a still more remarkable one for participating in their contents. When it has gotten the wind of such a treasure, it allures by a perpetual cry resembling the words *cheer ! cheer !* any traveller or honey-loving animal it can meet towards the nest ; sits trembling with avidity in a neighbouring bush, while its companion sacks the magazine : and finally obtains as a remuneration for its services the relics of the booty.—*Vide Linnæus, Sparrman.*

I'll be thy duteous Honey-guide.
 And *cheer! cheer! cheer!*
 Shall be my note through all the year.

Terror! O terror! hither they
 Bend them with all the might they may
 To bear my shepheidess away.
 The demons!—Oh, unhappy one:
 Art thou enchanted to a stone?
 Up! up! or thou art all undone.
 Oh, come! Oh, come, my lady-dove!
 My peerless flower! my Queen of May!

Enter GRUMIEL and MOMIEL.

I'll call thee every name of love,
 If thou wilt wend with me away!
 But wo! wo! wo!
 She will not answer ay or no!

GRUMIEL. Ha! ha! have we caught thee at last?

MOMIEL. Napping, i' faith! like a wildcat, with her
 eyes open. Come! bring her along.

FLORETTA. O my lost flower! my flower!

MOMIEL. Ay, *Trip-Madam* is her name: see how
 kindly she comes to it!

GRUMIEL. What is that hizzing thing there?

MOMIEL. Why, nothing less than three barleycorns'
 length of woman-kind, in a huge petticoat made of a white
 thumbstall, and having wings as long as a brown hornet's
 or a catepillar's after conversion. A pocket-piece!—She,
 too, has a name.—*Busybody*. Wilt come with us, Gad-
 about?

GRUMIEL. No! we have more of the sex by one than is
 welcome.

MOMIEL. Nay, thou may'st flutter and squeal and
 ricket about, like an old wren (as thou art!) when the
 schoolboy filches thy young one. Adieu, mistress! and
 bear my respects to *Monsieur* Saint Vitus, thy dancing-
 master.

GRUMIEL. Come on, thou gibbering ape!

MOMIEL. Then, I may say, like one of my kindred in
 the fable, putting my hand upon this wig-block of thine,—
 "Bless me! what a fine head were this, if it only had
 brains!"

GRUMIEL. I'll—

MOMIEL. Go! go on!—Take a graybeard's advice: never open thy mouth but to eat thy porridge. Though thou didst live upon garbage, nothing would ever go into thy throat that was not better than aught that came out of it. Go on, pray thee!—Despise not the use of thy trotters. —Good-bye, little Mistress Hop o' my thumb!—Warm work for an afternoon, Mistress! Thou look'st for all the world like a humming-top on the wing; and indeed would'st make a most lively representation of the proverb—a reel in a bottle. Go on, buzzard!

[*Exeunt Friends with SYLVIA.*

FLORETTA. Now may I to some covert creep,
And like the secret bird of sorrow
In darkling tears for ever weep,
Nor bid again the sun good morrow!
And *wo! wo! wo!*

Shall be my note where'er I go.

[*Vanishes.*

Scene VII.

The fairy camp, with tents displayed,
Squadrons and glittering files arrayed
In strict battalia o'er the plain:
Gay trumpets sound the shrill refrain;
From field to field loud orders ring,
And couriers scour from wing to wing.
On a soft ambling jennet-fly
And girt with elfin chivalry
Who mingle in suppressed debate,
Rides forth the pigmy Autocrat.
Her ivory spear swings in its rest,
Close and succinct her martial vest
Tucked up above her snowy knee,
A miniature Penthesilee!
Her Amazonian nymphs beside
Their queen, at humble distance ride;
Encased in golden helms their hair,
In corslets steel their bosoms fair,
With trowsered skirt loopt strait and high
Upon the limb's white luxury,
That clasps so firm, yet soft, each steed
Thinks himself manfully bestrid,

And snorts and paws with fierce delight,
 Proud of his own young Maiden-knight,
 Whose moony targe at saddle-bow
 Hangs loose, and glimmers as they go.
 Now breathe your fifes and roll your drums,
 'T is the Queen's Majesty that comes !

MORGANA. Look out!—look out!—Floretta should be here !

Or Osmé whom we sent.— [Exeunt scouts.

Nephton, droop not,
 Thou didst perform thy careful duty well!
 Rash and presumptuous Youth ! he merits all
 The punishment he suffers : To neglect
 The warning that thou gav'st him ere he past
 Insolent o'er the bounds, where his perdition
 Gaped for him, like the monster of the Nile,
 In every brake and jungle !

NEPHON. Madam, indeed,
 I told him 't was a fiendish stratagem,
 To lure him over, but he would not hear ;
 Stampd when I plucked his skirt, and swung his sword
 Round by the wrist, so that I'd lost my hold
 And hand together, but I let him go.

MORGANA. I know, I saw it ; thou art not to blame.
 Proud of his azure weapon, he would cope
 With those who scorn it, as they do the edge
 Of bladed feather, or those grassy swords
 Which our soft tourneyers wield—

[Cry without.] A messenger !

Enter OSMÉ.

MORGANA. Where is thy sister ? hast thou seen her, say ?

OSMÉ. Here comes the elfe, weeping her silent way :

Some dreadful news I wot she brings
 So lost in grief the wretch appears,
 Her head she hides between her wings,
 And cannot tell her tale for tears !

MORGANA. The Maid is lost !—Arm ! arm, ye warlike elves !

With potent virtues now endue yourselves ;
 Lay by your puppet swords and spears and shields,
 We must prepare for other fights and fields.
 Mount ! mount with me in clouds the blackening sky !
 War be the word, and Battle be the cry !

Scene VIII.

O thou dread Bard ! whose soul of fire
 Moved o'er the dark-string'd Epic lyre,
 Till brightening where thy spirit swept
 Lustre upon its dimness crept,
 And at thy word, from dull repose
 The Light of heavenly Song arose '
 O that this lyric shell of mine
 Were like thy harp, Minstrel divine !
 With thunder-chords intensely strung,
 To chime with thy audacious song
 That scorned all deeds to chronicle
 Less than the wars of Heaven and Hell :
 O that this most despised hand
 Could sweep so beautifully grand
 The nerves Tyrtæan !—I would then
 Storm at the souls of little men,
 And raise them to a nobler mood
 Than that Athenian Master could !¹
 But no !—the spirit long has fled
 That warmed the old tremendous dead,
 Who seem in stature of their mind
 The Anaks of the human kind :
 So bright their crowns of glory burn,
 Our eyes are seared ; we feebly turn
 In terrible delight away,
 And only—"Ye were mighty !" say.
 We turn to forms of milder clay,
 Who smile indeed, but cannot frown,
 Nor bring Hell up nor Heaven down.
 One gloomy Thing indeed, who now
 Lays in the dust his lordly brow,
 Had might, a deep indignant sense,
 Proud thoughts, and moving eloquence ;
 But oh ! that high poetic strain
 Which makes the heart shriek out again
 With pleasure half mistook for pain ;
 That clayless spirit which doth soar
 To some far empyrean shore,
 Beyond the chartered flight of mind,
 Reckless, repressless, unconfined,

¹ Tyrtæus, the Attic pedagogue, before the sound of whose lyre the walls of Ithome fell.

Spurning from off the roofed sky
Into unciel'd Infinity ;
Beyond the blue crystalline sphere,
Beyond the ken of optic seer,
The flaming walls of this great world,
Where Chaos keeps his flag unfurled
And embryo shapes around it swarm,
Waiting till some all-mighty arm
Their different essences enrol
Into one sympathetic whole ;
That spirit which presumes to seize
On new creation-seeds like these,
And bears on its exultant wings
Back to the earth undreamt-of things,
Which unseen we could not conceive,
And seen we scarcely can believe ;—
That strain, this spirit, was not thine,
Last-favour'd child of the fond Nine !
Great as thou wert, thou lov'dst the clod,
Nor like blind MILTON walk'd with God †
Him who dared lay his hand upon
The very footstool of Jove's throne,
And lift his intellectual eye
Full on the blaze of Deity :
Who sang with the celestial choir
Hosanna ! to the Eternal Sire ;
And trod the holy garden, where
No man but he and Adam were ;
Who reach'd that high Parnassian clime
Where Homer sat as gray as Time,
Murmuring his rhapsodies sublime !
Who from the Mantuan's bleeding crown
Tore the presumptuous laurel down,
And fix'd it, proudly, on his own !
Who with that Bard diviner still
Than Earth has seen or ever will,
The pride, the glory of the hill,
Albion ! thy other deathless son,—
Reigns ; and with them the Grecian one,
Leagued in supreme tri-union !
Then why should I, whose dying song
Shall ne'er be wept thy reeds among,
Lydian Cayster !— I, no bird
Of that majestic race which herd

Upon thy smoothly-rolling surge,
And sing their own departing dirge ;
But one who must, O bitter doom !
Sink mutely to my sullen tomb
Amid this lone deserted stream,
Whose sands shall pillow my death-dream,
And for my hollow knell shall teem
Its dittyng waters over me !
Why should I so adventurous be
With imitative voice to pour
One strain Cayster heard before ?

To stretch that bow should I pretend,
Which none but thou, dread Bard ! could bend,
Well might the uncheck'd thunder speed,
Full volley, to avenge the deed,
And blast me, impious : but I keep
Dread finger still upon my lip,
And inly to Suggestion say—
“Lead not that high heroic way ;
Where Milton trod few mortals may !”—
The war of Fiends and Virtuous Powers,
Sing thou in thy celestial bowers,
And charm the bright seraphic throng
Who crowd to hear the rapturous song,
And at their old recorded fame
Glow doubly bright. Not mine the same
High audience, nor a theme so high,
Nor oh ! such passing minstrelsy !

Wise in my weakness, I forego
The deeds of fell contest to show,
And Demon power met Godly host,
And battlefield was won and lost.
This has been sung in higher strain
Than ever shall be heard again !
I only tell ye to behold
A scene in sulphury volumes rolled,
And hear within the clang of arms,
With shouts and dissonant alarms :
There came a mighty crash ! a pause
As dread succeeds—O righteous cause !
Be thine that note of victory
Which shakes the pillars of the sky
With loud symphonious melody !

CHORUS of *Spirits Within.*

Victory!—

Victory!—Lo! the fight is done!

Victory!—Lo! the field is won!

Victory! O Victory!

Rejoice, ye glorious harps! rejoice!

Proclaim with one harmonious voice

Victory! Victory! Victory!

[*Enter the Fairy Host in triumph.*]

Victory!—

Victory!—Lo! the fiends are fled!

Victory!—Lo! their king is dead!

Victory! O Victory!

Pronounce it with your silver tones

And shining mouths, sweet clarions!

Victory! Victory! Victory.

Victory!—

Victory!—Lo! the welkin clears!

Victory!—Lo! the sun appears!

Victory! O Victory!

The Powers of Darkness yield the Glen,

So breathe sweet harp and trump again—

Victory! Victory! Victory!

[*Exeunt rejoicing.*]*Scene IX.*

The smoothest greensward, dry and shorn,
 Where glowing sundrops seem to burn
 Like ardent tears from Phœbus' eye
 Fallen in golden showers from high.
 Primroses, king-cups, cuckoo-buds,
 And pansies cloakt in yellow hoods,
 And splendid, bosom-button'd daisies
 With grandam ruffs, and saucy faces:
 The moss is hoar with very heat,
 And crisp as frost-work to the feet.
 O, such a place to dance a round
 To the hot timbrel's dinging sound!
 And when the booming finger runs
 Around its orb,—to hear the tones
 Of shrill pipe speaking in between,
 Like high-voiced woman 'mid hoarse men:

Tossing the head from side to side
To suit the humorous tune applied,
And stamping with uneasy glee
Till the wild reel has come to thee.
Then how the buxom lass is swung,
Scarce knowing why or where she's flung !
The kerchief dropt, and bosom glowing
Over its silken border flowing,
And the trim kirtle whirling high
Shows the wrought garter's rainbow tie.
But oh !—oh, whither do I stray
From sense and scope so far away !
Thou syren Girl, with flowing hair,
Hymné ! how sweet thy pleasures are !
Let me but hear thy trancing lyre
Sing "Come away !"—no foot of fire
Burning with messages to Jove
Transcends my haste to her I love.
Thee, thee I follow, half unseen,
Through endless vales and forests green,
O'er wilds and browy mountains stern,
Lone heaths and pastures red with fern,
From rock to cave, from lake to stream,
Fast fleeting like a noiseless stream
Where'er I see thy beauty beam :
Ev'n though thy most seductive smile
Leads me erroneous all the while !
As the bee mourning tracks the flower
That winds bear offward from its bower,
So, murmuring all my way, I roam
To find thy sweetness in some home,
Some verdurous nook, where tiptoe I
Put back the froward greenery,
To hear the attraction of thy tongue
Bowing the woods to drink its song.
Oh ! well for me thou art not one
Living in the green deeps alone,
Or banding with the Sisters three,
Who drown men with their melody :
For did'st thou call me through the roar
Of wild waves on a cliffy shore,
Where billowy Ocean's lion trains
Shake into surge their hoary manes,
My knell should that same day be rung

Blind Nereus' chapell'd caves among.
 Then leave, ah ! leave me to my story !
 Begone thou, with thy crowns of glory !
 Unless thou drop one wreath on me,
 What should I care, slight Nymph ! for thee ?

STEPHANIA, ROSELLE, JACINTHA, ANDREA, GERONYMO,
and Peasants, assembled. They perform a dance ;
 ANDREA, *between STEPHANIA and ROSELLE as part-*
ners.

STEPHANIA. Nay, I can foot it no longer.

ROSELLE. Nor I, in faith ! I cannot feel my legs under me. Signior Andrea, you must dance to that oaken stump, if you will not sit down with the rest of us. O ! my heart bounces so, it will break my girdle !

JACINTHA. Well, all is happy now. Our beautiful Queen and her partner are restored.

Second Peasant. Ay, and here is an entertainment the hospitable dame has provided to welcome us all. Would the hostess were now at the head of her table !

Third Peasant. Ay, would she were !—Jollity has set in for the evening.

ROSELLE. If it would only last till doomsday, we might be satisfied !

GERONYMO. We are, we are satisfied ! We are all blessed ones, that is the tot of the matter !

STEPHANIA. And our unlucky friend there is the happiest of us all. He has not yet finished his setting-step to his stumpy partner.

First Girl. Lawk ! what a skip-jack ! what a bounce-about !—How he cuts !

Second Girl. How he capers ! He must have been a rope-dancer, as sure as sure—

Fourth Peasant. Was he ever on the stage, think ye ?

GERONYMO. Absolutely he was, absolutely : I saw him myself there ; namelessly, or, that is to say, on the top of a barrel.

Third Girl. Is this he I have heard of under the name of Merry Andrew ?

ROSELLE. No wonder if it was, for he is the merriest rogue—Oh ! I do love that impudent smock-face of his !

JACINTHA. I thinks he looks as if he were about to jump out of his skin with joy.

STEPHANIA. All his afflictions are at an end. He has not even a bone in his foot to complain of.

ANDREA [*stopping short*]. Oh, misery of miseries ! Oh, unspeakable misfortune !

ROSELLE. Mercy upon us ! what new calamity ?

ANDREA. O, that a man cannot have two wives at a time !—I could find it in my heart to turn Turk for the privilege.

ROSELLE. Ho ! ho ! Signior Doleful !—is it this that afflicts you ?

STEPHANIA. I thought there was another face under that hood.

ANDREA. What say you, Cherrybud ? would you have me ?—And you, Sweetlips ?

STEPHANIA. By your leave, signior : either or neither.

ROSELLE. Come, tell us honestly now : What kind of a husband should you make ? How should you behave were you married to either of us simple maidens ?

ANDREA. Hang myself incontinently.

STEPHANIA. O pretty !—hang yourself if married to either !

ANDREA. Ay ; in despair for the other. But if I were only married to both—ye Graces ! what a trio we should make ! what a picture for a painter !—Would there be anything, do you think, on this side of the sky to compare with us ?

ROSELLE. No, certainly ; unless it were a white goose between a couple of gray ones.

ANDREA. Holla ?

STEPHANIA. Or an ass between two thistles.

ANDREA. O gemini !

ROSELLE. Or the likeness would be more like if we said, a crab-apple between two cherries.

STEPHANIA. Or, as it is in the church, a figure of Death between two angels.

ANDREA. Astonishment !—I profess the women have tongues !—Tongues apiece, as I live, to do evil !

STEPHANIA. Ay, and more than that—

ANDREA. What ! more than one tongue apiece ?—O monstrous !

STEPHANIA. No, signior ; but we have the use of that we possess, as you shall find if you please to set it a-going.

ANDREA. By that bunch of keys at your girdle I know you to be a housekeeper, and therefore a person worthy

of credit; I will take your word in this matter.—[*To GERONYMO.*] Well, friend!—What a bowing dost thou keep there? as if thou wast upper man of a saw pit!—Is this what you call scraping an acquaintance?

GERONYMO. [*To STEPHANIA.*] O imperious mistress of my heart!—Suffering-queen of my affections!—I cannot say what I could say, nor will I speak what I would speak!

ANDREA. Write it then, write it! If your tongue is bound to keep the peace on this ground, take her on some other. Inscribe her a billet-doux, and let it be as full of compliments as if it were her epitaph; let it breathe professions like the air of a minister's levee-room; stick it all over with sweet words, as a pastrycook does a tart with comfits; and, in the end, let me advise you, as one that knows the fashion, to subscribe it—"yours faithfully": yours faithfully, which is as much as to say—Put your whole trust in me, and fear not!

GERONYMO. I will! I will do so! And I will take care, as you say, not to admit—"yours faithfully"! it has a most porpoise-like air with it!

STEPHANIA. O Geronymo! you need not be porpoise-like to gain me: you are already a melting creature!

ANDREA. Pooh! have we been conjuring up a whirlwind to blow gossamer! This is a quail, indeed! that comes, fat and foolish, at the first pipe of the sportsman. Well! the vanities of this life are enough to make any man a crying philosopher.—Hark ye, ladies! [*To JACINTHA and ROSELLE.*] What say you to a glee, or catch, or chorus?—Li! ti! lirra! tirra!—Eh, temptresses? eh, you pair of wild pigeons?

JACINTHA. Roselle chants like a green linnet; but I—

ANDREA. No, you cannot sing at all: I'd swear it, from the shape of your neck. It is made like an ivory pipe, only to be played upon with the fingers; and a man must put his lips to your mouth if he would produce sweet music. Come I'll charm it out of you.

JACINTHA. Not so free, brother.

ROSELLE. Not quite so free, Signior Rolypolillo!

ANDREA. Bless me! have I got into a mountain-nunnery?—Well; it is all one to me; I have my kisses, and you have your lips. If you will not embrace your good fortune when it offers, 't is your own loss. I know there will be biting of nails for it in private: but never come with your tilly-vally to me! never presume even to blow me a favour!

I had rather kiss, ay, a thousand times, the brim of this delicious goblet, than the lips of the Empress of Morocco herself, though they say her mouth might be taken for a beehive. [Drinks.

Second Peasant. He should have gills like a fish, to let all he gulps pass out behind his ears.

ANDREA. Come, lasses, a glee ! a glee ! My pipe is as mellow as a French horn. Come ; you have nothing to do but say *hem ! hem !*—put your right hand under your left breast to show that your heart is beating—and then, with an interesting droop of the head, thus, as if you offered your neck to a scimitar, and, indeed, la ! had much rather die than exhibit your faculty,—begin *expressivo e amabile*, raising your voice by degrees till it bullies the echo, and almost breaks your sweet heart-strings as short as macaroni. *Allons !* “Tirra lee !”

Two sweet Maidens sang together

Tirra lirra ! tirra lee !

Comes a Swain, and asks them whether

He might join their tirra lee !

O how happy, happy he,

Might he join their tirra lee !

To his prayer the nymphs replying—

Tirra lirra ! tirra lee !

Kept the silly shepherd sighing

Still to join their tirra lee !

O how happy, &c.

Nought they said unto his suing,

Nought but—tirra lirra lee !

For they loved to keep him wooing,

Still to join their tirra lee !

O how happy, &c.

ANDREA.

Looking sad while they were laughing,

What, the silly clown ! does he ?

Takes, in mere despair, to quaffing

Sweeter far than tirra lee !

[Drinks.

ROSELLE. A good excuse !

JACINTHA. His modesty had some need of it.

ANDREA. O how happy, happy he

Pouring out his tirra lee !

Enter AGATHA, SYLVIA, and ROMANZO.

As I live, madam, your wine-merchant is an honest fellow : this is excellent Champagne as ever I drank at five-and-sixpence a bottle !—though, indeed, a little too potent of the gooseberry.

Peasants. All joy attend our Queen ! our Queen ! the lady of our hearts !—our sovereign princess !—the star of our worships !—the idol of our perfections !—Huzza ! our May-Queen ! our May-Queen !

SYLVIA. Thanks, kind friends and neighbours ! Would I were, indeed, a queen for some few hours, that I might reward, by other means than these acknowledgments, your love and loyalty ! But though my coffers are empty, my heart is full, and you shall partake largely of its affections. Welcome to you all !

AGATHA. Welcome ! welcome, friends and neighbours !

Peasants. Does she not speak very queen-like ?—so courtysing, and gracious, and withal so high-spoken and indignant !—O, if our duke had only seen her before he married the proud French princess, with her nose turned up like the toe of a Chinaman's slipper !—Well ! to see the luck of foreigners in this country ! we make hothouse plants of them, and leave our own pretty flowers to the will of the weather !

ROMANZO. [*To ANDREA.*] I may freely pardon you for what you did unwittingly : but let me beseech you for the future to keep a stricter guard upon your tongue, whose volubility is ever laying you open to your enemies.

ANDREA. Here she is, sir, in petticoat regimentals (*Pointing at ROSELLE*) : this is she who will stand sentinel over my volatility ; this is my body-guard, my life-guard, my beef-eater, who will never let me travel the length of her apron-string without keeping, I dare swear for her, watch and ward upon my actions. What other guard would you have me set over my tongue, unless I were to go muzzled like a terrier in the dog-days ?

ROSELLE. Never doubt me ! I will stop your mouth—

ANDREA. With kisses : O you are a sad wanton !—She will always hang upon me thus, sir, as if I wore her for a Spanish cloak, and our lips are always touching like a double-cherry. In a word, sir, she is, poor girl ! so incorrigibly fond of me, that I believe I must, perforce—take her to wife, lest there might be, as they say in England, a

suspension of her *hævus corpus*, or some other dreadful calamity, too tedious to mention.

ROSELLE. I will promise to hang myself for love, when you drown yourself for melancholy.

ROMANZO. There is surely something very catching in this place. I should as soon think of your taking a lock-jaw as a love-fever.

ANDREA. Reform, sir! reform!—it is the order of the day, and shall be radical in my constitution. I have determined to remedy all abuses, redress all grievances, root out all old prejudices, customs, and inveterate habits, which have so long made a borough of my body; and to regulate myself in future by a new code, which in a short time I hope and trust will render me—the envy of all my surrounding neighbours, and the admiration of the world!

ROMANZO. Marriage is the serious end of all our follies.

ANDREA. Alas! ay, sir! It is what we must all come to! Death and matrimony are both grave words; and the chief distinction between them is that the halter very often brings us to death, while matrimony very often brings us to the halter.

ROSELLE. No fear of that with you: if you are to be choked, it will be with a flagon of Rhenish.

ANDREA. But the upshot of the whole is, there is nothing left me now but—conjugal felicity. I have been, it is true, while in your worship's company, little better than a reprobate: now that I have kept this lady's, I am little better than one of the converted. In a word, sir, this nymph has made a prototype of me, and I only await your benediction. From having been, as you know, sir, a perfect she-Timon, or in other words, a manhater of all woman-kind, I am now, in all love-matters, become as faithful and fond as a green turtle!—Come, sir, pray give away the bridegroom: I shall never have courage to throw myself into her arms without your paternal countenance.

STEPHANIA. O the Virgin! how he blushes!

ROSELLE. In good truth, sweetheart, if bashfulness had been the only stumbling-block in the way of your promotion, you would never have broken your shins over it. However, I like you better than if you were ever so modest.

ROMANZO. Well then, come, I will bestow your innocence upon this maiden—

GERONYMO. So please your reverence, and mine too

upon Mistress Stephania. She will be much beholden to your reverence for the donation.

ANDREA. Ha ! ha ! ha ! ha ! your worship is like to have all the modesty of the country at your disposal, if you will take it under your protection.

ROMANZO. Truly I have no desire to meddle with it : you and honest Geronymo must endeavour to get rid of the troublesome commodity without my assistance. I dare say you will experience no impediment from your partners.

ANDREA. 'Pon my feracity ! I apprehend there will be no let in that quarter : eh, brother Sheepface ?

GERONYMO. You have said it, you have said it : there 't is, and that is the tot of the matter !

ROMANZO. Our hostesses are seated.

AGATHA. You are so full of joy, that you seem to want no other nourishment.

Peasants. Should not our Queen sit under the Maybush at the head of the table ?

ROMANZO. True, neighbours, it should be so. Come, fairest ! you shall take your state, and I will be your cup-bearer.

SYLVIA. No, you must sit beside me, else I shall be like many a real queen, unhappy in my splendour. If I be indeed queen, you must obey me in this. Come, sit, sit. Sit, fair companions, and let each shepherd choose his place next the lass who will make room for him. But hearken ! —ere we touch what is set before us, it is meet that we return solemn thanks for our happy deliverance from peril and sorrow to that Power which has befriended us in our extremity.

FINAL CHORUS.

Sweet Bards have told
That Mercy droppeth as the gentle rain
From the benignant skies ;
And that in simple-hearted times of old,
Praise unto Heaven again
Did in a fragrant cloud of incense rise !

Thus the great sun
Breathes his wide blessing over herb and flower,
Which bloom as he doth burn ;
And to his staid yet ever-moving throne,
They from the mead and bower
Offer a grateful perfume in return.

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So then should we,
Whom Pity hath beheld with melting eye,
Utter our hymns of praise,
In solemn joy and meek triumphancy
Unto the Powers on high :
Raise then the song of glory ! Shepherds raise !

THOMAS À BECKET

A DRAMATIC CHRONICLE

PERSONS

HENRY II.

PRINCE HENRY, RICHARD (*afterwards* RICHARD I.), and
JOHN (*afterwards* King), *Sons of* HENRY II.

EARL OF CORNWALL, *the King's Uncle.* *Earls of* CLARE
and of LEICESTER.

RICHARD DE LUCY, *High Justiciary.*

HUMFREY DE BOHUN, *High Constable.*

RICHARD DE HASTINGS, *Grand Prior of the Templars.*

WILLIAM DE EYNSFORD, *a Military Retainer of the King.*

LORD WALTER DE CLIFFORD.

SIR REGINALD FITZ-URSE, SIR HUGH DE MORVILLE, SIR WILLIAM DE TRACI, SIR RICHARD BRITO,	}	<i>Knights of the Body.</i>
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RALPH DE BROKE.

SIR MOTTRAM FIER-À-BRAS, *Warder of Woodstock.*

CARDINAL PHILIP, *the Pope's Legate.*

BECKET.

ROGER, *Archbishop of* YORK.

HENRY DE BLOIS, *Bishop of* WINCHESTER, *Brother of*
King Stephen.

FOLLIOTT, *Bishop of* LONDON. *Bishops of* SALISBURY
and of NORWICH.

GEOFFREY RADEL and RICHARD GRYME, *Priests.*

JOHN OF OXFORD.

GLANVILLE, *a Jurisprudent.*

JOHN OF SALISBURY, PETER OF BLOIS, WALTER MAPES, <i>Chaplain to the King,</i> HENRY BOSHAM, <i>Secretary to Becket,</i> GABEL, <i>a Paré-Keeper.</i>	}	<i>Scholars.</i>
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Physician. Conjuror. Pursuivant at Arms. Inn-Keeper.
Boy. Ostler. Beggarman. Henchman.

ELEANOR, *Queen of* HENRY II.

ROSAMOND DE CLIFFORD.

Maid of Honour to the Queen.

DWERGA, *female Dwarf to the Queen.*

Knights and Ladies. Minstrels. Soldiers. Monks and Nuns.
Attendants, &c.

THOMAS À BECKET

ACT I.

Scene I.

A Street in London.

DE MORVILLE, DE TRACI, and BRITO *meeting.*

DE TRACI. Good morrow, Hugh de Morville!—Richard Brito,

Grandson, how great I know not, of the BRUT That kill'd his father, and gave life to Britons, (*Brutings* they should be call'd!),—*bon jour*, Sir Richard!

BRITO. I love but little to be jeer'd, Sir Gwillim, By you, or any spring-heel'd Norman knight, About mine ancestors. That Trojan Brutus Was a king's son, and Conqueror of this Isle, No Bastard Conqueror neither!—I have heard Our learned Chancellor tell of it.

DE TRACI. What, Becket? Learned he is in sooth; and gallant too, And wise, as few of his compatriots are.

BRITO. Gallant as ye! gallant and wise as ye, Half-brethren of the seagulls! whom foul blasts, Loosed from her wallet by some Lapland witch, Blew o'er the Northern foam to France, and thence The next ill wind puff'd hither!

DE MORVILLE. Down with these swords! Will ye ne'er stop this brawling? Fie! be friends: He's young, Sir Richard; he's hot-brain'd, De Traci.— Yes, as you said, Becket's a cunning clerk, Or he would scarce be an Archdeacon; wise As Guiscard's self, or what had made him Chancellor? For boldness, he exceeds all priests; and dares Take even the very Devil by the horns Did he fall out with him.

DE TRACI. Well, if he be Falcon in fight, he's vulture after it!

DE MORVILLE. He'll have his pickings! Know you not our adage—

The Church's crook
When rightly shod,
Is a reaping hook
Or a fishing-rod!

DE TRACI. Yet he's against the Bishops, in this strife
About their jurisdiction; so 'twould seem
At least: and echoes our sharp-witted king,
Who cries them up as "Shepherds skill'd to fleece,
Drive, and make market of, those sheep the people."—
Allons, Fitz-Urse! what think you of this man?

Enter FITZ-URSE.

FITZ-URSE. Whom?

DE TRACI. Why, the man of men—him with more names

Than blaze in Doomsday-Book—the Provost of Beverley!

DE MORVILLE. Dean of Hastings!

BRITO. Constable of the Tower!

DE MORVILLE. Secretary of State! Chancellor of the Realm!

Archdeacon of Canterbury! Castellan of Cahors!

Lord of the baronies of Eye and Berkham!

With some few other—scores of trusts and titles,
Enough to break Ambition's back withal.

He's a mere sumpter-mule for robes and riches,

Save that he trots with them to his own stall,

Where sables are his litter, cloth of ermine

His housing, and his fodder golden corn.

But more:

As if the custody of the Royal Seal,

With all the perquisites thereto belonging,

The administration of all Sees and Abbeys

Whilst vacant—which they are whene'er his purse is!—

The Wardship of all Minors, whose revenues

Leave a rich crust in running through his hands;

As if these gifts sufficed not to fulfil

His huge capacity for power and office,

He is made tutor to the Prince himself,

Young Henry, whom the crown o'erhangs—this Becket!

This son of a Saxon truckster, Gilbert Becket,

And a bought Moor-woman!—this Jack o' the Beanstalk,
That climbs up to the clouds, lark-swift, and there
Mocks the mazed world beneath him!

FITZ-URSE. Very true.

DE MORVILLE. This glib Bologna lawyer—

FITZ-URSE. True, but yet—

DE MORVILLE. But what, Fitz-Urse?

FITZ-URSE. Thirty-five score pick'd lances

He brought us, when much needed at Toulouse:

Twelve hundred in the Norman wars. King Harry

Owes him some precious jewels of his crown.

DE TRACI. *Pardie*, but he has claim'd them! If he
saved them,

'Twas for himself, to perk in his own cap.

FITZ-URSE. He's a stout soldier—that's well: sits his
horse

Firm as St. Michael sits his Mount; no storm

Moves him a hair: Can drive his lance right through

A mailed breast, and out between the shoulders;

That's pretty well too!

BRITO. I have seen him strain

One of our bows, our mightiest English bows,

Till the tough yew bent withy-like; and when it

Whirr'd straight again, his shaft was in an oak

Barb-deep, twelve-score yards off:—that's not ill neither!

DE TRACI. He gives brave galas, keeps a *Cour d'Amour*

And *Castle-Joyous*, throng'd with dames and knights,

One blaze of brilliant arms and brighter beauty,

Where minstrels warble thick as birds on boughs,

And softest instruments thrill through the halls,

And murmurs sweet make up the swarming sound,

And merry bells ring aye a *gaudeamus*!

This holy Chancellor hawks, hunts, jousts, drinks,

Games, and *etceteras*—'slife, a noble fellow!

DE MORVILLE (*aside*). Our youth's brain is all feathers,
so his thoughts

Are of the flightiest—

FITZ-URSE. As for me, gentlemen,

While Becket aids the king, with sword or pen,

With head in helm or cowl, I am content

To like him.

DE TRACI. *Bah!* so am I.

BRITO.

And I.

DE MORVILLE.

Then I.

Enter a BEGGARMAN.

BEGGARMAN. Your charity, brave gentlemen !

DE TRACI. If a pennon were as tattered as this fellow's cloak, 'twould be called the more honourable, and perchance hung up in a chapel.—Here's money for thee—go !

DE MORVILLE. 'Tis so small a piece of brass, that it shines in the abyss of his hat, like a glow-worm in a dark ditch. Here's another munificent speck—go ! we are but poor Knights of the King's Body.

BEGGARMAN. Bless ye, but I am poverty itself !

DE TRACI. Thou? thou art a Knight of the Hospital, no less, as I see by thy crutch and bandages. Get thee away, Sir Lazarius ! here comes the king.

BRITO. Heaven smiles in his blue eye, and from his brow

The sun himself shines out !

DE MORVILLE. Becket is with him.

They seem right jocund. How they laugh ! as boys,
With their ripe-apple cheeks.

BRITO. The Chancellor's a wit,

And our good Harry loves it, seasoning wisdom,
As an abbot loves a pot of ale with spice in't.—
Get thee along, fellow !

BEGGARMAN (*going behind the knights*). I'll steal, if nothing else, a look at him. What's a king like? Good lack, I suppose St. George-and-the-Dragon. He has two bodies, that's sure !

*Enter HENRY and BECKET, the King with his hands
on BECKET'S shoulders.*

HENRY. Ha ! ha ! ha ! ha ! By Mahound, an excellent tale !

Come, let us have the other ! Press thee a little ;
Thou overflow'st with humour, like the gourd
With richest juice.—Come, shall we hear it, ha ?

BECKET. May 't please you, sire, now that the evening
sun

Reflects him somewhat redly in our looks,
Which he perchance,—so tinged are they with wassail,—
Mistakes for clustering grape, whereon he loves
To hang with warmest kisses—

HENRY. Let him kiss !

And send his burning soul into our cheeks,

Till he change back our blood again to wine,
That fed it! An old Wassailer himself!
That swills the nectarous ether till he reels.
Look you, he wears an after-dinner flush
Crimson as ours! Rogue, he has had his drench,
And purple streams run down his fleecy skirts,
Staining them deep as thine!—Ha? what, Fitz-Urse?
What news from Canterbury?

FITZ-URSE. My liege, his Grace
The archbishop gasps so hard for life, he scarce
Had breath to make fit answer to your Highness.

HENRY. Poor man! Heaven's gates stand aye ajar for
him:

He has a very Saint been ere he died:
A meek, good man!—What mightiness in mildness!
I've never gain'd from his soft nature half
I had wrung from a stern one.—But he gave some proof
That he agreed the felon-priest should stand
Trial in our Courts, not his?

FITZ-URSE. Ay, my liege:
Here is the instrument his death-stricken hand
Marked with the cross. [*Giving a parchment.*

HENRY. So! well. Keep it, Chancellor,
[*Handing it to him.*

Till further time.—Have with you to your palace,
And we will hear that story by the way,
You promised us. [*BECKET stands abstracted.*

Prithee what mood and figure

Is this deep syllogism thou'rt solving now?

He's sunk within himself!—Ho, Chancellor!

BECKET (*starts*). I was but conning o'er the tale—my
memory—

HENRY. Since you can fold you in your loose fur-sleeves,
And in the sable pall of thought besides,
You want not this warm gown?

BECKET. I would in truth
Put it off—soon—with your good leave—

HENRY. See'st there
[*Pointing to the BEGGARMAN.*

Yon shiverer, in rags as few as hang
Upon the roadside thorn?—Were it not well
To give that wretch, who shakes i' the summer's sun
Like Winter's image, something of your too-much
For his too-little?

BECKET. I am all content,
And will provide him quickly.

HENRY. Thou wert ever
Most charitable, Thomas!—Come, strip off
This superfluity. [*Laying hold of his robe.*]

BECKET. Nay, nay, your Highness.

HENRY. I swear I'll have it!—You shall walk the town
Naked as dame Godiva, and more stared at,
But I will have it! [*They struggle.*]

Alight. Ha! ha! ha!—the King will carry it!—the
Chancellor doubles it close!—'Tis a stiff tussle!—Lion
against Bear!

DE MORVILLE. No; but shepherd against wolf in
sheep's clothing! 'Twill be rent between them!—

BECKET. It is the maddest humour!—

HENRY. Tut, man! thou need'st but bury thee again
In Meditation's solemn robe: it much

Becomes so grave a lord!—Ha! ha!—I never
Saw thee so lost in foggy thought before.

'Twas a rich mantle, but thou wilt be cover'd
With blessings far more precious.—Give it him!

[*It is flung to the BEGGAR.*]

BEGGARMAN. Heaven guard your Majesty, and send
my Lord

All that he wishes! And for his good-will
In leaving me this benefit, may he live
A glory to the Church, and at his death
Be worshipt 'mongst the blessed saints and martyrs!
No worse I pray for him—

BECKET. Enough, enough!

[*Exit BEGGAR.*]

HENRY. Ha! ha! ha! ha!
Thou 'rt well repaid for thy benevolence!—
Fitz-Urse, I say?—Again to Canterbury;
Stay by the Primate; let no buzzing monks
(Save his confessor, Gryme, whom we can trust,)
Haunt his bedside; nor, while he droops to slumber
On the eternal pillow of repose,
With pestilent whispers sting him in the ear.
He's not to change the instrument—mark that!—
He has given o'er the priest to the King's Bench,
Lawful tribunal for such crime.—And Reginald!

If the Archbishop hold his promise well,
Give his meek spirit my god-speed, and send me
Immediate tidings when he is in heaven.—[*Exit* FITZ-URSE.
Have with you, Chancellor.

BECKET.

At your Grace's pleasure.

[*Exeunt omnes.*]

Scene II.

A Royal Apartment.—QUEEN ELEANOR *alone.*

ELEANOR. Henry, thou play'st me false! With whom,
I know not,

But to find that out, feel myself all eyes :
Each sense, except my sight, is numb, null! null!
I do not taste my meats ; I hear no music
Even when the trumpet brays it at my side ;
To me the rose is scentless as the briar ;
What touches me might be a burning share,
Or wedge of ice, they are indifferent :
But I can see! see—atomies! Thou shalt not,
Minion, escape me! 'Mongst ten thousand faces
Were thine one, I could swear to its bold blush.
O! I could guess her from a gown, a glove,
A cap, or aught her wanton form had ever
Swell'd out!—Suspicion, thou art call'd the dam
Of false conceits, to which the Devil is sire ;
To me thou seem'st somewhat almost divine,
That canst discern all things at once—a searcher
Into the murkiest heart! Come, Inspiration
Of the abused ; suggest the shape, the air,
The vision of my rival, and my victim!—
Let me consider :—

I should know something of the stratagems
Play'd off by tricky woman ; all the webs
She weaves before men's eyes to hide herself ;
The painted bashfulness she can put on,
To seem what she is not ; the brazen front
She steps so high with, to be thought impregnable
As Pallas, when as slippery as Venus :
All these, ere my divorce from that nice fool,
Louis of France, punctilious Louis! I
Had perfect-making practice in ; and if
I have the pain of such repute, I'll have

The gain, please Vengeance!—Oh, she must find out
 Some holier sanctuary than the sepulchre,
 Even for her dead bones, that I shall not gibbet them
 As high as Haman's, to the grinning world!—
 My Maidens there?— [Enter the Maids of Honour.
 If ye be such?—Now, Bold-face!

Are you the King's—toy?

First Maid. Madam, my humbleness never
 Reach'd the majestic level of his eyes.

ELEANOR. Nor you, stale Prudery?

Second Maid. Madam, not I!

ELEANOR. You'll all say so! you'll all say so! when even
 The infamous brand had burnt plain *Harlot* there
 On the convenient tablet of your brows.—
 Get ye all gone!—Come back, and dress me quick—
 (*To herself.*) I will go talk with that same cunning man
 At Clerkenwell, who kens all covert doings
 Which Night's dark mantle wraps.—(*Aloud*) Is there, or no,
 A haunt of wise-folk near the brambled fields
 By Old-Bourne hill?

Third Maid. Great madam, ay.

ELEANOR. Had ye not, one of ye, your fortune told,
 Even to the pettiest freak?

Third Maid. Your Grace, they told me :
 "You are to serve a Queen, and gain one day
 A pair of royal ear-rings for your pay."

ELEANOR. Darling of Destiny! they said you sooth,—
 [*Pinches her ears.*

I'll see if they tell me such punctual truth.—
 Ilie to your chambers!—Dwerga! [*The Dwarf peeps forth.*
 Make the bolt

Upon these gadders, and these gossip-goers,
 As wandering and as wanton as the vines
 That must be nail'd up.— [*Exeunt Maids.*

I will now to Becket's,
 But in another hood. Ho there, Abortion!

Enter DWERGA.

DWERGA. Here! here, my grandam!

ELEANOR. Thine, prodigious Imp?

DWERGA. What, am I not thy grand-child? thou that
 bought'st me

Of my Norse dam, when scarce the size of a crab,
 And fed'st me to my present stature with

Dainties of all kinds—cocks' eggs, and young frogs
 So freshly caught they whistled as they singed,
 Like moist wood, on the spit, still bubbling out
 Dew from their liquid ribs, to baste themselves,
 As they turn'd slowly!—then rich snails that slip
 My throttle down ere I well savour them;
 Most luscious mummy; bat's-milk cheese; at times
 The sweetbreads of fall'n mooncalves, or the jellies
 Scumm'd after shipwreck floating to the shore:
 Have I not eat live mandrakes, screaming torn
 From their warm churchyard-bed, out of thy hand?
 With other roots and fruits cull'd ere their season,—
 The yew's green berries, nightshade's livid bugles,
 That poison human chits but nourish me,—
 False mushrooms, toadstools, oak-warts, hemlock chopt?

ELEANOR. Ay, thou'rt an epicure in such luxuries.

DWERGA. My fangs still water!—Grandam, thou art good!

Dost thou not give me daily for my draught
 Pure sloe-juice, bitter-sweet! or wormwood wine,
 Syrup of galls, old coffin-snags boil'd down
 Thrice in fat charnel-ooze, so strong and hilarious,
 I dance to a tub's sound like the charmer's snake
 We at Aleppo saw? What made me, pray you.
 All that I am, but this fine food? Thou art,
 Then, my creatress; and I am thy creature.

ELEANOR. My creature, not my offspring.

DWERGA. Oh, thou thought'st

I meant thy very babe—by the young Saracen

Of my swart favour, whom thou loved'st in Jewry—

ELEANOR. Small monster! I will crush thee like a hornet

If thou darest buzz a word of that—

DWERGA. Sweet grandam!

I would not for the world, save here alone

That we may chuckle at thy husband's honours!

ELEANOR. Fetch me my hood,—

The yellow one.

DWERGA. Yes, grandam!

(Sings)

As the browns are for the clowns,
 And the blacks are for the quacks,
 So the scarlets for the harlots,
 And the yellows for the jealous!

[Exit.

ELEANOR. Venomous spider! I could pierce it through

With a witch's bodkin, but it does me service.

DWERGA (*re-entering behind her*). Doats on thee too,
dear grandam!—less in gratitude

Than that, as Dwerga does and all her race,
Thou work'st ill to those gawkish, smooth, soft things,
Call'd *mortals*.—Shan't I go with thee, my Dame?

ELEANOR. Thou wouldst be mischievous.

DWERGA. Lovest thou not mischief?
No!—hatest it, worse than the horse-leech hates blood!

ELEANOR. In, cockatrice!—that wouldst sting even the
hand

Which feeds thee, and caresses!—In, deformity!

DWERGA. Must I sit purring like a tigress-cub
Over my paws alone? or peer from out
These hairs, like a new-caught baboon?

ELEANOR. Attend

Thy duty; or I'll pack thee to the chymist,
Who'll crown thee first in vitriol, and then
Bottle thee up as a false birth of Nature,
To draw the passing gaze with. 'Tend thy duty!
Thou'lt have enough to keep those skittish fillies
From whinnying out of bounds, if they should hear
Even a jackass bray.

DWERGA. I'll fetter them!

They are as fearful of me as a fiend.
If they dare venture forth, I'll spit green fire,
Pinch them about the ancles, fly upon them
As a wild cat, and score their waxen cheeks.
Distract them with such dissonant yells and screams
That they shall think ten furies flicker round them!
Break out?—Let one o' them.—with my spongy lips
I'll suck a blood-spot on her neck will spoil
Her beauty for a month! Not the Nile weasel
Falls with such malice on the crocodile's eggs,
As I will on these glossy ones!

ELEANOR. Do so!—yet take
Some heed,—for mortals have their malice too.

DWERGA. Ha! ha! ha! ha!

They cannot hurt me, as my skin is thick
And bags about me all in dewlaps—see!
Then I can roll me up into a hedgehog,
And put out prickles that would pierce their feet,
Did they tramp on me; I can slip away
Like a sleek otter when they grasp at me,

And then turn short and bite till my teeth meet.
Let me alone for them!

ELEANOR.

In, then, and watch.—

[*Exit DWERGA.*]

The Chancellor holds a feast : there my false Harry
Will be, no doubt, by preconcert, to meet
His *bella donna*. None thinks of Eleanor!
Her bloom is flown, as are the amorous bees
That once clung to it!—I am left forsooth
With a few manikins and greensick girls,
To lead an old-maid's after-life with apes
In this hell-gloomy palace!—But I'll follow!
I'll be a guest they neither wot nor wish!
I'll be a go-between,—to part, not couple!—
Are they assembled yet?—Some half-hour gone!—
'Tis time!—Ha! ay!—he bows her to the dance.
They smile—they lisp—they make dove's eyes—they mur-
mur.

He leads her now to a dim, curtain'd room—
They rush to the love-wrestle—kiss—they kiss!—
O serpents in my heart!—methinks my flesh
Turns to a swarm of them! I feel my hair
Tangle and writhe and swell like sinewy creatures!
I'm Fury's self,—all but her scourge!—Oh, lend it,
Vengeance!—this hand with palsy of eagerness shakes
To use it on these kissers!—Kiss? hiss! hiss!
My blood turns poison at the sound!—Kiss! hiss! [*Exit.*]

Scene III.

Apartments in BECKET'S Palace, gorgeously set out and illuminated. Knights, Ladies, Squires, Pages, Minstrels, Attendants : the former attired or disguised in different quaint or characteristic dresses. Cates and wines served round. Music. The King seen appalled as a Soldan in an inner chamber.

BECKET enters, and signs to DE MORVILLE.

BECKET. De Morville, you love not these mummeries,
Whilst, as all other wise men, you allow them.
Hie to the porch, good sir; you know the Queen;
Should Jealousy, that ignis fatuus,
With green and flickering taper light her hither,—

Though she pretends in sourness of her soul
To love retreat, and feasts but on her spleen
(Which sprouts the more she crops it—crude refection,
That makes her meagrer still!) ; and though she is
Too proud for mirth's equality ;—yet should she
Perchance come—

DR MORVILLE. I am to give notice.—[*Aside*] Hang him!
I scorn these gauds no more than Eleanor,
Though I scoff at them too.

BECKET. Brito is there,
But—"Two heads," says the proverb. If she come,
Delay her with some shows of reverence.
Whilst you send word. There's reason high—look to't.

[*Passes on.*]

DR MORVILLE. I'll fill Sir Richard like a leathern jack
Up to the lips with Winton wine ; and then
You shall have Roland for your Oliver ! [Exit.
[*Several persons move through the rooms ; among
them a Veiled Lady, followed by a Gentleman-
Usher. After they go out, re-enter* BECKET.

BECKET. Another guest I've mark'd within the halls,
Unbidden as the Queen,—at least by me!
When I besought her name, that frowning Usher
With courtesy more haught than baron's, said
Between his teeth,—*Demoiselle Disconnue*.
Whom she may be indeed, I but surmise.
For still she flits and dits, fair Spectre, gliding
Speechless along, nor mixing with us mortals.
More than the pale Moon with the enamour'd trees
Through which she glances, coldly beaming on them.—
Much time is in the minute. This bright thing,
Like some rich gem, is for a monarch's hand,
I guess, not being unskilful in such jewelry :
Let me do him—and some one else—a service,
By keeping it from the Gryphon ; Eleanor
Must not lay clutch on it, lest she perhaps,
Like the Egyptian drunkardess, dissolve it
In some sharp menstruum—yea, so devour it,
Through luxury of revenge !—
Good king, thou'lt thank me better for this deed,
And faster bind me friend, than had I saved
Rouen or Caen ! Our private services seem
Love to the king, public but to the kingdom.
Harry of England !

Albeit thou hast much wisdom, for one born
 But to be made a fool of from the cradle,—
 Yet so predominates the weaker element
 Of that same earth-and-water compost—*Man*—
 That even the fiery spirit heaven put to it
 Cannot drink up the spring of softness in thee,
 But leaves thee mouldable by skilful hands—
 What 's this? I am forgotten!
 Most by myself, and worst—

[*Turning to the guests.*

Drink, gentlemen!

Ye trifle with me only!—Fill me there [To a Page.

A horn of hippocras, so amber-pure
 The yellow lights shall flame more lustrous through it!
 Brim it up, boy! till the fresh dazzling foam
 Swell o'er its burnish'd lip, like these fair bosoms
 Above their bordering gold!—Health, beauteous Dames!
 Sweet Demoiselles! health, noble Chevaliers!
 Pledge me, I pray you, all!—my wishes are
 So personal for the health of each, they ask
 Unanimous return!

Guests.

Be happy, sir,

As you deserve; we need not wish you more!

BECKET. Thanks! thanks!—Now let the flood of joy
 roll on

And bear us with it,—so we keep our feet!
 Now let the perfumed air with pleasure glow
 Till even the hard heart melt, the iciest burn!
 Now, gallants, lead your mistresses a measure
 Where they can prove the Graces are not fled
 With classic times!—Come, ladies!—Sooth I'll swear
 You've not fine ancles if you fear to show 'em!—
 Minstrels, strike up! let the gay mandolin
 Mock the grave-voiced theorbo; whilst the harp
 With intricacy sweet of various chimes,
 Bewilders its own strain; and life and shalm,
 Piercing the tabret's solid-booming hum,
 Give a clear edge to music!—*Trouveurs! Conteurs!*
 Spread, spread about your free wits and yourselves!
 Hie to the bow'rd chamber and alcove
 Whither Love's chief luxuriasts retire,
 And in the ear of bending beauty pour
 Your amorous songs, and tell soul-moving tales,
 Or mirthful, to such triumph of your skill,
 That these vast domes re-murmur with sweet sighs

Or throb with echoing laughter. Make all pleased
To be here, as I am to see them!

[*Passes on.*]

First Lady. A gallant man, our Host! the cream of courtesy:

Second Lady. Oh a magnificent creature!—such a leg!—

First Cavalier. He is the prince of priests!

An Alderman. Ay, and a learned, I'll assure you: he has read Geoffrey of Monmouth and the Lives of the Saints—in Latin; besides being deep in Romance as not a minstrel of them all!

An Abbot. O sir, his accomplishment has gone much farther than your imagination: Venerable Bede himself, who read so much he did not know the extent of his own knowledge, was an ignoramus to our Chancellor.

Second Cavalier. Truly it is possible: what with his embassies to Rome, and his studious sojourn among the Italians, he must have their Latin talk as much at his tongue's end as a nun's parrot has the vocabulary of scandal.

Abbot. It must be so, for never unfledged wit
Could take such flight as his, so near the sun!

Second Lady. He has learned somewhat better than your learning, I'm sure! What is it all to *La gaie Science*? In that he is perfect!

Third Cavalier. Well, I forgive him being able to read and write, which is only fit for those slugs of the cloister-garden, the monks, but the disgrace of a preux chevalier; I forgive it him all, because he can sing the *Song of Roland* better than any man since—what-d'ye-call-him? that led us on at Hastings.

Abbot. You speak of *Taillefer*, the warrior-minstrel—

Enter BRITO behind, intoxicated, with a leathern jack.

Third Cavalier. *Taillefer*, or *Tell-fair*, either will do—he told us fair enough we should be conquerors.

Fourth Cavalier. This Becket is a Saxon—where did he get so much fire of genius to clarify his fatness of brain derived from such ancestors? What are the Saxons fit for, but to swill, sleep, and tend swine?

BRITO. That's a libel, by St. Edward the Confessor!—I confess it a most nefarious libel, and will prove it so on this spot!

Fourth Cavalier. You lie there as you stand, and shalt lie again where you fall!

[*Draws.*]

BRITO. Come on with your bull-rush, you perpendicular French frog!—Here's my battle-axe! [*Swinging the jack.*]

An Esquire. Oh, he is drunk, he's drunk!—tongue and all totter! [*Supporting BRITO.*]

BRITO. You're drunk yourself! You've drunk so much, everything dances before you, and so you think I totter!—Tend swine, indeed? Saxons only fit to tend swine? You, Norman squire jackanapes! you're only fit to tend me,—and that's not much better!

Guests. Ha! ha! ha! ha!—truth is in wine!

BRITO. I heard what ye said, backbiters—swine forsooth only fit to tend Saxons!—Oh, I shall never forget it!—Was not Harry Beauclerc (bless his scholarship!) half Saxon at the least?

Fourth Cavalier. Norman, to the backbone of his heart!—how prove you him half Saxon?

BRITO. Ay, and more! Wasn't his wife, Maud Atheling, Saxon,—and what call you that but his better half? Pish! it is child's-play to put you addle-headed Normans down! Was Alfred the Great Saxon or no? tell me that. And was he only fit for a hog-herd, a tender of bristled sheep? Did Alfred lack genius or learning? Didn't he translate the *Pater Noster* into English, which every good Saxon, who doesn't carry his prayers in his cheek, has by heart?—Didn't he cudgel those sea-robbers the Danes (birds of the same nest with the Normans, I trow!) till he hammered the laws of propriety into their loggerheads?

Fourth Cavalier. Cudgel the Normans?—(*Drawing.*)

BRITO. Ay, Normans or Lord-Danes, 'twas all one!

[*They fight.*]

Guests. Part them! Peace, peace; here comes our Entertainer!

BECKET (*re-entering*). What is the matter? Revelry is not riot!—

How now, Sir Richard! wherefore thus come up From the guard-chamber?

BRITO. Come up? marry come up!—I'm come up because I was elevated!

BECKET. Who put this porker into such a pickle?

BRITO. Why, good Sir Hugh, none else! Sir Hugh was my pickler, and preserver likewise—with drink—or I had perished of a dry rot in your guard-cellar below!—He thought to keep me from mounting, the knave! but I roared beyond all forbearance.

BECKET. De Morville? ha! I smell a viper.—
(*To the Attendants*).

This swollen wine-skin tumble not about—

Look,
[*Exit.*]

BRITO. Now a tankard of brown ale to damp my lips
with, and a song, when my throat is cleared for a chaste
melody—
[*Singing as he is led off.*]

Then a catch we'll troll,
While the beechen bowl
Trundles along the table—O!
And we'll drink and sing
Like a priest or a king,
As long as we are able—O!

*Scene changes to another Room, embowered, and opening on
an Orchard.*

HENRY (*as Soldan*), LA DISCONNUE, and her
Gentleman-Usher.

HENRY. Shine forth, fair Moon! I prithee, from be-
neath

The cloud which floats between me and thy beams,
To bless me with the soft blaze of thy beauty!
I am an eagle of the night, that dares
Fix on the glorious Sister of the Sun
His ardent eye, which broadens as she brightens,
To take in more of her loved radiancy
With which his rapt soul kindles!—Oh, at length
Put off that shroud; unless thou'lt have me think
Death hath o'er-marbled thee, so cold thou seem'st.
So mute, so still!

LA DISCONNUE. Alas! I am yet living!—
But we are now alone, and shelter'd here:
Yet here, in secret and heart-quivering sounds,
I must speak only to thee, as a bird
That warns her mate the fowler is too nigh.
Thou know'st whose will it is has brought me hither
To-night, unto this Castle Dangerous,
No Joyous one to me!

HENRY. Fair Rose of England!
My flower! my bosom's sweet!—look not, I pray,
With such a sadness and lost pensiveness
Upon this secret venture for my sake,
Thy harmless presence here: nor ever deem
Love's blossomy ways are so bestrewn with thorns

To pierce all tenderest things.

LA DISCONNUE. Ay, to the heart!

HENRY. Nay, nay, not thine!

They shall not: trust thy puissant king and knight!

LA DISCONNUE. Well! well!

HENRY. I wish'd thee here, it is so rare for us
And difficult to meet; what with the jealousy
Of my gaunt Queen, and thy self-chariness,
Which ne'er confides thy honour unto mine,

[Nodding at her Attendant.

Sans surveillance, for all my promises,
My book-sworn faith and heaven-register'd vows.

LA DISCONNUE. Ay me!

HENRY. Thou murmuring dove!—fear not; shalt soon,
And safe, betake thee to thine own dim bower.
Meantime thou'rt here but *La Belle Disconnue*!
Unknown and unsuspected.

LA DISCONNUE. Let me still

To all here seem a vision, save to thee.

HENRY. Nay, by Love's shaft! thou art no substance
yet

Even to me!—I have not touch'd thy hand—

[Taking her hand.

Most delicate thing! let mine eyes drink thy lustre!

Can o'er-and-o'er refined earth become

Indeed so dazzling-pure? I could scarce guess thee

From lightest leaf freighted with new-fall'n snow

Which the chill evening sun tinges so faint,

Save that thou throb'st (as thou wert all one pulse)

Though laid in my soft clasp!—Sweet, tremble not!

England himself's thy champion!—Once to my lips—

Once, and no more!—

[Kisses her hand.

Dian, who gazes on us,

Might consecrate this sin!

LA DISCONNUE. O no! methinks

Yon moving shrine of purity doth shudder—

It sheds bright tears—grows dim—We have offended!

Let me depart.

HENRY. Wilt thou be yet so coy

And credulous of ill?—Take this as seal [Shows a Ring.

Of my drawn bond to thee: canst thou have more?

When Eleanor of Guienne makes one among

The carved saints and sovereigns in our Abbey,

(Which she is wrinkled grim enough to be!)

Thou art my Queen!—By all above I swear it,
And all beneath!—Is this enough, suspectful?

LA DISCONNUE. Hear'st thou, Lord Walter?

Gentleman-Usher.

I am satisfied!

BECKET (*passing swiftly behind, mutters*)—The Queen!
the Queen!

HENRY. Now wish I from my soul
Louis had kept her or the Devil ta'en her!

[*Exeunt different ways: the Ring drops in the confusion.*]

Enter QUEEN ELEANOR.

ELEANOR. Plantagenet, by his port—Vain guise! I know
Well, the crown-bearing air of that proud head,
And fitful clenching of that hand, as if
It aye grasp'd at a sword!—I can see all!—
Were no companions here? Methought I heard
The rustling harsh of gauzes, and light step
Of silver-slipper'd woman, fleeting away!—
They've barred my passage, but I'll break one—

[*Turning towards the Verandah.*]

Vengeance!

I pray'd thee for a vision of my rival,
And there it is—vanish'd into the night!
Curses on both!—

[*Seeing the Ring.*]

What's this? thou basilisk,
That kill'st me with thy fatal glare! cold glitterer,
Which, like the jewel that the bright-eyed toad
Voids from his head, poison'st e'en by thy touch,—
How I abhor—nay, love thee!—

[*Snatching it up.*]

Thou that show'st

The wrong, wilt haply cast some little ray
On the wrong-doer. One gleam, where'er so deep
She hides her this side hell, will strike her guilt
Aghast,—as to all workers in dark ways,
One sunbeam is a thunderbolt!—Good night,
Thou whom they blazon—*La Belle Disconnue*,
For ignorance is idolatrous. We yet
May know each other; till then, rest ye well!

[*Exit.*]

ACT II.

*Scene I.**The King's Closet.*

HENRY and FITZ-URSE.

HENRY. Old Theobald is dead : well, Heaven send him
More peace than he gave us from fractious monks,
Our mild Archbishop!

FITZ-URSE. He's not stiffer now
In body than he ever was in spirit.

HENRY. By Mahound thou say'st true, rugged-mouth'd
Reginald!

Your lawn-lapt bishop is less flexible
Than baron stark in steel. The Christian Pharisees!

FITZ-URSE. Dog's death to them, and ass's burial
Outside the gates!

HENRY. We'll crush them, Reginald!
We'll crush the stiff-necked shavelings now, if any
Iron be in this arm!—Go you and haste
The Council—let me see—to the Red Chamber:
They've had a summons; haste them! [*Exit FITZ-URSE.*
He shall be Primate.

Not that his learning, wisdom, and state-craft,
So much commend him to the office; nor
That courage of the head, which few men have
(Heart-courage is beast-common!) to dare look
Beyond this petty wave of time, and scan
Futurity's spreading deep; nor yet in sooth
His life, which, I confess, like mine, gives forth
Some odour of unsanctity:—but that
He is my friend, who loves his self for me;
Whom I can trust with all my thoughts as freely
As the two-headed God could let his flow
From one brain to its neighbour. For these matters
Touching the Church, wherefore should he oppose me,
Now, after long agreement? He has oft
Said Amen to our secular anathema,
Against encroachers on our civil rights.
No, I could ne'er select a fitter tool!

He ever to my will has been obsequious,
 To my least wishes, even when his hatred.
 He help'd me to the crown too!—Though he have
 Small influence, as a losel, with his order,
 So best; he 'll have less interest for them too!
 With a rough besom I must sweep this Church,
 For it is foul; albeit at the same time,
 I scratch some reverend bare legs within it.
 'Tis a bold move: and may e'en shake the kingdom
 Till the throne totter; but it must be made!
 No blenching, Harry! Deeds become great by danger:
 Upon Destruction's hair-broad margin still
 Success doth love to walk!—Let's to the work:
 'Twill halve itself upon me and my choice,
 So become light to the joint labourers.
 He shall be Primate!

[Exit.

Scene II.

A Conjuror's Cell. Apparatus for magic.

ELEANOR disguised, and the Conjuror.

ELEANOR. Make me to see her who doth own this ring
 In what so cloudy and disfigure form
 You will,—but make me see her.

Conjuror. Give me the jewel
 First: there is nothing can be done without
 The jewel.

ELEANOR. There!—Shew me her in the arms
 Of Satan's self, burning in his embraces,
 If possible, good Wizard!

Conjuror. Madam, whoe'er
 You boast yourself, your accents are more terrible
 Than those I conjure with! They scare my wits,
 And make me use wrong mixtures. Yea, they seem
 To scare the very demon I would summon,
 Mine own familiar!

ELEANOR. Cite him again! It is
 My heart-wrung groans to Vengeance make me hoarse,
 Tearing my gorge:—cite him again, I say!

Conjuror. Then keep you silence!—(*Aside.*) The she-
 bandog's throat
 Is furr'd and dry, she breathes so hot for blood!

Such horrible and hollow, hell-drawn sounds,
Ne'er came from sepulchre unconsecrate,
At whose dark bottom moan the tortured dead.
Bless me from this grim harridan!

ELEANOR. Thou caitiff!
What keep'st thou muttering there thy husky charms?
Shriek out thy incantations and commands
Till the deaf adders of the pit shall hear thee!

Conjurer. She's more a domineerer over demons,
Than I!—Is't Hecate's self?—Madam, perchance
My black-bird would come to your chirrup rather?
(*Aside.*) So wrapt she is in fardingales, I cannot
See by her foot if she's the Devil's dam,
But truly I do think it!—Let me stand
Safe in my circle— [*Gets within his circle of gallipots.*]

ELEANOR. Slaverer! idiot!
Mumblin' thy mummeries, and dropping drivell
Into thy row of potsherds, raise me a fume
Blood red and black as the two elements
That make hell's atmosphere,—where I may see
Some Power of Darkness, who shall give me light,
Volume himself abroad!

Conjurer. I will! I will!—
(*Aside.*) *Fulgor ex fumo* is beyond my art,
However I must raise a good thick smoke
To smother her, if but to stop her noise.—

(*Muttering.*) *Caballo! caballavi! caballero!*
Mescoskylaxinax! I conjure thee
By the rains and the winds and the thunder,
In the name of the stars of power
Algoth and Algol and Aldebarân,
Through the decocted virtue of these herbs,
Devil's-bit, dragon's-wort, death's-foot,
Per medium et mixtram mineration,
Quantum et qualium sufficit,
Mescoskylaxinax! I conjure thee,
Arise! arise! arise!

[*A volume of lurid smoke rises: in the midst
a fiendlike shape appears.*]

Conjurer. Who art thou, villain!—Mark with what respect
He'll take my greeting—

A Voice. Thy familiar spirit!
Full of thy nature! thy swart other self!
Therefore most truly—villainous!

[*DWERGA comes forth, the fiend-shape flies.*]

Conjurer. Mercy!—I never
Raised such a real devil before!—Avaunt!

[*Quits his circle, and runs behind the Queen.*

DWERGA (*getting into the circle*). Hu! hu! hex! hex!

Now I'll be conjurer!

First let me lay this gibbering, ghost-like form
In a Red-Sea—of ruddle!— [*Dashing a gallipot at him.*

There's pot-luck for thee!

(*Dashing another.*) There's a hot cordial to keep life in thee.
Thou bloodless wretch! that even at thy birth
Wert a half dead-born thing!—Mistress, I'll spit him
On his own rod, and roast the tame goose here
With his pale liver stuck beneath his arm-pit—

ELEANOR. Forbear!—

DWERGA. I'll do him a nice delicate brown
Upon the sulphur, a tit-bit for Baal!

ELEANOR. Bring not the people in with this strange
hurley— [*Exit Conjurer.*

DWERGA. Hu! hu! hex! hex!—He could not charm
an owl

Out of an ivy-tod to play the wiseacre,
Or screech wild oracles!—I have more craft
In this hard, knotted skull, than deep-read dunce
Ere drew from his dry parchments!—His familiar?
Ay!—she has been—for 'twas a female spirit
Gross as a male—familiar enow with him!
Six white-faced imps, as like to both of them
As tadpoles are to toads, squat by the fire
Under that trap-door, whence your fine diabolus
Rose vapouring in rank perfume, from a pile
Of pitchwood; o'er whose blaze in cauldron huge
Welter'd their soup of cabbage. I'd have scratch'd
Those pap-soft faces while within my claw,
But fear'd to make them squall.

ELEANOR. How got you there?

DWERGA. From outside, where you left me snivelling.
Worse than a beggar's brat, with cold, I scamper'd
On all fours, like a black cat, in the dusk,
Down their blind stairs, into their reeky kitchen,
When you stept up aloft: there sat I squinting
Out of a rat's nest, and saw all.

ELEANOR. And am I

The dupe of such poor tricksters, then?

DWERGA. No, grandam;

Of thy own folly rather!—But take comfort :
 It is not the first wife has play'd the devil
 In her own house— [Clutching up the Ring.

Ho! ho! a prize! a prize!

ELEANOR. Reptile! render me that.—

DWERGA. Not till I've lick'd it
 [Scrambling to the roof.

Clean from the colley, and decypher'd it.
 I'm out o' thy reach among the rafters. Nay,
 Whirl aught at me, I'll tear a hole in the roof,
 And blazon shrill as the crack'd trumpet blows.—
The Queen of England in a Conjuror's garret!
 Thou wert best let me alone. I'll suck the virtue
 Out of this talisman, and spirt it down
 Upon you, grandam!

ELEANOR. Thou art all lie! a warp
 Of subtleties! all malice, mockery!
 As treacherous and unreliable
 As the parch'd reed is to a drowning man!
 I cannot trust one word thou say'st, except it
 Condemn thyself.

DWERGA. Or thee, thou mayst trust that too!—
 But hey?—What's here?—A Rose within a Snake
 [Examining the device
 Coil'd huge about her: good!—in a love-symbol,
 The serpent aye should couch him by the rose!
 What's this again that twists the flower around,
 Strangling her, as the ivy doth the elm
 In his lithe arms? A feather'd sprig, with blossom
 Shaped like a cockle-fish or butterfly:
 Why, there's your secret!

ELEANOR. Where? tell me! I'll give thee
 Comfits made from the whites of deadmen's eyes!—

DWERGA. Pish on thy comfits and thy deadmen's eyes!
 Let me torment these lovers for thy need.

ELEANOR. What lovers? who?

DWERGA. The Broom-sprig and the Rose,
 Thou silly Queen!—Malice and silliness
 Make up earth's meanest creature!—Who is now
 The sprig that bears the cockled-butterfly,
 But thy Plantagenet—*planta-genista*?

ELEANOR. And who the rose?

DWERGA. That's more a riddle to me.—
 Sweat brain!—Perchance some trull whose name is Rose,

Or Rosalind, or—stop! it lightens on me!—
 This undulous snake cut here, great *Jormungandr*—
 As Runic rhymesters call him—doth set forth
 Ocean, that ever on his belly rolling,
 Coils round the convex world; which world the rim
 Doth therefore stand for: whence the Rose itself
 In our quaint stone-cutter's device but means.
 Rose of the World,—that is, plain *Rosa-Mundi*:
 Plantagenet and Rosamond are the lovers!

ELEANOR. But there may be many Rosamonds in the realm?

DWERGA. Seek the most fair: that's she. Plantagenet hath

A hawk's eye for sweet duckling, though he stopp'd
 His maw with fishy thee.

ELEANOR. What I could do
 Without thy hateful service!

DWERGA. Thou canst not:
 A weak and wicked mind must ever have
 A cunning, evil-loving minister
 To work its ends; must be the jest at once,
 Hatred and scorn and tool of its own slave.
 I've a rare merit for a minister,—
 Sincerity! What think ye, grandam?—Go you
 Now to the wise folk to colloque with them
 Who Rosamond, the fair unknown, may be?

ELEANOR. I must gulp this,
 Howe'er so bitter; but the long, large draught
 Of honey-sweet revenge will drown it all! [Exit.

DWERGA. Go on, good grandam! I'll stick in thy skirts,
 Like a live burr; Fear not! Hu! hu! hex! hex!

[Sings as she follows.

Speckle-black Toad and freckle-green Frog,
 Hopping together from quag to bog;
 From pool into puddle
 Right on they huddle;
 Through thick and through thin,
 Without tail or fin;
Croakle goes first and *Quackle* goes after,
 Splash in the flood
 And plump in the mud,
 With slippery heels
 Vaulting over the eels.
 And mouths to their middles split down with laughter!
 Hu! hu! hex!

*Scene III.**A State Chamber. The Council assembled.*

CORNWALL, CLARE, LEICESTER, BECKET, DE BOHUN,
DE LUCY, GRAND PRIOR, WINCHESTER.

CORNWALL. Well met, my lords : what makes us here
so soon after cock-crow ?

CLARE. I can tell as little as Sir Chanticleer himself ;—
perhaps his Highness's conscience-keeper has the secret ?

LEICESTER. Ay, Chancellor, how judge you ?

BECKET. What I, gentlemen ? In good truth my know-
ledge on the matter does not exceed your own, nor is my
judgment any deeper than yours,—(*Aside*) and that is very
shallow ; my guesses may pierce a little farther indeed !

DE LUCY. Silence ; here 's the King !

Enter HENRY.

HENRY. Fair morning.—Ha ? when comes the trial on
Before our bench, of that law-breaking priest ?

BECKET. To-morrow, Sire, I hope.

WINCHESTER. It cannot be.

HENRY. It cannot, bishop ? wherefore ?

WINCHESTER. Sire, I fear

There may be obstacles.

HENRY. Pshaw !—cliffs and gulfs

Are obstacles to grasshoppers, not eagles.—

Archbishop Theobald is dead, my lords :

Whom shall we give the regular chapter leave

To elect ? Who shall be Primate, cousin Clare ?

CLARE. What thinks your Highness of the Abbot Blaise ?

HENRY. Too old ! too old !—I've had enough of grey-
beards !

Age renders obstinate, and knots and gnarls

The bent of our green-grown opinions. I

Still less than conjugal, love stale episcopal

Petticoat government !—Your man, Grand Prior ?

GRAND PRIOR. My Lord of Winton here, though like
an oak

Hoary at top, has sap enough ; and fame

Of wisdom for a kingdom.

HENRY. He has too little

Even for himself, or else he had not cross'd me.—

O Prior, 'twere too rough and wearisome
 An office for my lord ; too full of "obstacles" ;
 I would not throw them in the velvet path
 His wisdom rightly chooses to the grave.—You, Constable?

DE BOHUN. I'm no thinker.

HENRY. What say you, Chancellor?

BECKET. My gracious liege, I have no choice but yours:
 That will, as ever it is, be most discriminate,
 Profoundest, wisest ; all-advantageous.
 For him, the kingdom, and your royal self.

HENRY. So think I!—Gentlemen, salute his grace
 Thomas à Becket, our good Chancellor,
 Archbishop of Canterbury, and Primate of all England.

Lords. Our best congratulations to his grace!

BECKET. My liege, let my humility decline
 This honour, I beseech—

HENRY (*in his ear*). Nay, Thomas, keep
 For imposition-time i' the church, your *Nolo*
Archiepiscopari!—Put this other
 Pigeon into thy scrip, poor man!—

(*Aloud.*) We've said it:

Now that is done we call d ye hither for,
 To give some state and solemnness to the deed
 Ere it be sanctified by ritual

Which we much reverence, and will observe

In all its just assumptions,—now disperse,

Each to his several duty. I to mine. [*Exit.*]

[*The Lords take leave, with much courtesy
 towards BECKET.*]

BECKET. Your lordships' lowliest, most devoted slave!—

[*Escort Lords.*]

The Second Man of the kingdom!—My ambition
 Mounts then its hoped-for towery throne ; and there
 Sits crown'd with the proud mitre, scarce o'ertopp'd
 By one star of the regal diadem!—

Am I indeed the son of Gilbert Becket?—

How my soul swells?—like his who, pinnacled

On some high-pitch'd, realm-skirted promontory,

Takes in the immensities around, beneath,

Skies, seas, and continents, with rapturous gaze!

How mine eye kindles! How my spirit burns

Like yon great sun, brighter as it moves higher!—

My very frame seems grown gigantic!

I feel as I could overstride the earth—

Yea, grasp heaven's ruling orbs in my two hands!
 Thou purer air that makest the mountain-pine
 Shoot up till he befits his lofty station,
 Why shouldst thou not descend in nourishing dew
 To make high-natured men pre-eminent
 Of form as mind?—Becket! thou'rt in the clouds;
 Sublimity makes thy brain swim—thou'rt not fit for it!
 He's only great who can despise his greatness.
 Be not the night-fly drawn into the flame
 By thy blind love of splendour, and there burnt!
 True Magnanimity hath no outward measure,
 Nor is reveal'd by that. Is not the emmet
 Sagacious as the elephant? To our minds
 Alone, we may—by custom of great thoughts,
 By venturous deeds and versancy with power,
 Ambrosial food of books, august discourse,
 By ever straining towards some height from which
 Our former selves look little—to our minds
 We may add stature, cubit upon cubit,
 Until in them we become Anakim,
 Nobler than earth e'er form'd!—

'Tis reasonable,

I do confess, to think that this fine essence,
 Grandeur of soul, should breathe itself throughout
 The mien and movements: every word should speak it,
 Howe'er so calm—like the pleased lion's murmur!
 Each tone, glance, posture, should be great with it.
 All levity of air, too buoyant cheer,
 The o'er-familiar smile, salute, and chat
 Which sinks us to the low and common level,
 Should be dismiss'd, and giant-minded things
 Disclaim the pigmy natural to most men.—
 No doubt!—that's well!—that's very well.—
 The Second Man of the kingdom!—This is much,
 And yet I might be more!—Not just the first,
 That were scarce possible; but—but—co-equal!
 To become which there gleams a ray. O Becket!
 What a brave course to run! lustrous, celestial,
 As thy bright birth-star's, when he would ascend
 To the world's zenith! Clouds and storms will gather
 Round him—nay, blot him o'er; but through them he
 Bursts soon, as I shall!—If at last he falls,
 He falls in splendour,—and all men must die!

[Exit.

*Scene IV.**The Queen's Apartment.**Maids of Honour.*

First Maid. Set all to rights: stir! stir!—See that the royal stool has its valance tucked up behind, like a house wife's skirt of a week-day,—or we shall get a scolding only proper for scullions.

Second Maid. Be brisk, lasses!—no one can tell when the devil's at our elbow till we feel it pinched.

Third Maid. Will you never put away that mirror, Marian? The Queen detests all reflectors as much as you doat on them.

Fourth Maid. Do ye know why? Because Eleanor sees a black angel in them, and Marian a blonde one.

Third Maid. Ha! ha! ha! the vanity—look at her simperings!

First Maid. Hush for your lives! Don't let a cricket's mirth be heard among us; she hates that too worse than a death-watch.

Third Maid. She thinks every jest aimed against herself—she's so good a but for it: that is her jealous and suspicious nature.

Fourth Maid. Pooh! then we shall have all the magpies banished from the park, because in her walks they seem to chatter and chuckle at her. [*Exit, and returns.*]

Second Maid. Get thee gone, i' the Witch of Wokey's name!—here she comes, pondering and plotting with her Evil Genius.

Third Maid. What! with our dwarf governess? that extract of nettle-stings?

Second Maid. No, thank our stars!—but with the devil that possesses and tears her, Jealousy! Mum!

[*Enter ELEANOR, who sits. The Maids of Honour stand a-row behind her.*]

ELEANOR. One of you has a sister, or some relative, called Rosalind—or Rosamond—eh? Or some such fantastical embroidery of plain Rose—eh?

Third Maid. Yes, Madam: the name of my cousin's stepmother's niece,—no, my cousin's stepfather's grand-niece, by the female side,—is, if it please your highness, Rosette.

ELEANOR. Nothing but Rosette, after such an ear-breaking pedigree?—away with her! None other of ye,—eh? Confess the truth, or it shall be torn from your tongue's ends by burning pincers: confess!

Second Maid. I have a sister Rosamond, your highness.

ELEANOR. Ha! I thought truth would come out! Is she well-favoured?

Second Maid. Yes, Madam; fresh and fragrant, as bright of bloom and as innocent as a rosebud itself.

ELEANOR. Innocent? hear this!—So! so! so! so!—She was at the Chancellor's revel last night, your immaculate Rosebud?

Second Maid. Madam, I believe not—

ELEANOR. She was—Hypocrisy! Disguised there, and skulking into every corner save the kennel, where she should!—She was there, I say!

Second Maid. Truly then, Madam, not to contradict your highness, it must have been unknown to her nurse,—for she is yet but seven years old.

ELEANOR. Indeed?—(*Aside.*) How the Fury, for all her blazing torch, misleads me! Well, knows any one besides of a Rosamond, kin or acquaintance?

First Maid. There's Rosamond de Ros—

ELEANOR. What years has she?

First Maid. As I guess, Madam, some fewer than ninety—She is one of the Gray Sisters.

ELEANOR. Humph!—a withered Rose; let her rot! Who else?—tell me no more of your babes or bearded women.

Fourth Maid. O lack! there's another Rosamond—the goatherd's daughter!

ELEANOR. Goatherd? goatherd? Paint her to me. The king in sooth has some goatish propensities.

Fourth Maid. Madam, red-haired as a fox, and of a roan complexion: she is as huge of mouth and hideous as the Ogress that makes but four mouthfuls of an ox, and bolts little children for white bread—

ELEANOR. Good: that's enough.

Fourth Maid. There's Rosamond de Clifford too, Madam.

ELEANOR. Ay, what's she?

Fourth Maid. Why, Madam, if it please your grace, as beautiful as Aurora of a May-morning.

ELEANOR (*starting up*). Tell me her height to an inch—her hair, her walk?

Fourth Maid. Madam, so please you, her shape is about mine, as near as may be.

ELEANOR. Your shape?—She's taller, is she not? Less pury too; less fat of the land upon her,—eh?

Fourth Maid. My very form and mien, Madam.

ELEANOR. The King love such a blowsabel?—Has anyone else seen this Rosamond? Is she like our dairymaid here?

Third Maid. Madam, as like as if they were stamped with the one butter-print!

Second Maid. O yes, Madam: both made of the same Dutch cheese!

First Maid. Twin-dishes of last week's curds, garnished with carrots to give them a colour!

ELEANOR. So much the better!—Her eyes, nose, mouth, complexion, what?

Fourth Maid. My own, Madam.

ELEANOR. Why, your eyes are round, small, green-gray, and rimmed with red like a carrier-pigeon's; your nose perks out from the middle of your face like the boss of a child's target; and your complexion is as pallid and silver-sick as a leper!

Fourth Maid. Madam, indeed, notwithstanding my disparagers here, Demoiselle de Clifford is called in her own shire—Fair Rosamond.

Second Maid. Fair, means nothing but white there: she has, you know, as her highness said, your parsnip skin and complexion.

First Maid. Besides, she squints, and can look all round her, before and behind, like a rabbit.

Third Maid. Like a rabbit? nay, she has something of a hare-lip, that's certain; but to my thinking the worst about her is, she halts on the right leg.

Fourth Maid. Indeed I did hear she has six fingers to one hand,—now I have but five to either.

DWERGA (*from behind*). That's she! that's she! as sure as jealous Folly
Is of the feminine gender!—None but one,
The paragon of her sex, could stir so much
Green gall against her; as we see the Moon
Hooted by choleric owls for her strange brightness!—
Fair Rosamond is thy foil, thy rival, Queen!

Seek her ; she 'll soon shine out. Why, she must be
A blazing star of beauty, who can make
These pale-faced mortals see such ruin in her !

ELEANOR. Rather that yellow worm whose reptile fire
Shall lead my foot to tread it out !

DWERGA. True ! true !
Sweet grandam !—Like a she-fox driven to cover,
The death-expecting glare of her fine eyes
Shall beacon us towards her den. I 'll be the terrier
To worry her out ; but you shan't muzzle me.

ELEANOR. How is it I ne'er heard of her before ?

DWERGA. O ! O ! O ! O ! tell thee of a ripe cherry
Which all the birds peck at, and thou thyself
A piece of wither'd bark, fit for the tanner !
That were rare courtiership !

ELEANOR. " Fit for the tanner !"
I 'll see if I can pierce thy hide, thou harden'd one—
[*Strikes a silver bodkin into her.*]

Next time I 'll stitch thy saucy lips with it.
Scorn is thy mother-tongue, and borne because
Thou speak'st none else : but thou 'rt of late become
Malicious as old Hecate's pet of monkeys.

DWERGA (*between her teeth*). Curse thee !—
Why, so I am old Hecate's pet,
Being thine !—No more of that sharp nudger, pray thee !—
[*ELEANOR threatens it.*]
Not saucy, Mistress sweet ! but cockahoop
With pride and hope to serve thee !—(*Aside.*) I could
maul her !

ELEANOR. To roost there !—go !—begone !

DWERGA. In you, before me,
Spawn-colour'd things ! I 'll give ye chalk enough
To feed ye white.—Must they not in with me ?

ELEANOR. Ay !— [*Exeunt DWERGA and Maidens.*]
I 'm sick of ye all, myself, mankind, the world,
And gladly could groan out my rest of life
Upon the dust this moment !—Thou shalt rue
Thy pretty nickname yet, Fair Rosamond !
To compass that will be a pastime !—Yea,
I shall love well to catch this noxious gnat,
And lean upon my wrist to mark its pain
As it writhes round my bodkin, buzzing there
Its feeble soul away in shrilly cries.—
Beware of Eleanor, *La Belle Disconnue* !

[*Exit.*]

*Scene V.**A Room in the Palace.*

HENRY, PRINCE HENRY, CLARE, DE LUCY, DE EYNSFORD, GLANVILLE, DE BOHUN, FITZ-URSE, RADEL, and other Courtiers.

HENRY. We are now at the goal of all our wishes,
Now have we all our quarries within clutch,
Both Church and State are now beneath our rule,
The Crosier being fast bound unto the Sceptre ;
Now are we doubly king—ha, cousin Clare ?

CLARE. Most true, my liege ! for now your other self
The Archbishop reigns associate in the realm,
Heaven save your Majesties !

HENRY. Nay, one too much !
But you shall shout that blessing with more joy,
Albeit less jocular, when some seasons hence
My little Harry here and I sit crown'd
Together. Will it not be brave, young Sir ?

PRINCE HENRY. Yes, and 'twill be my right : my
mother told me.

Oh, I'll be such a king ! I'll have a gown
Of velvet stiff with gold, and a tall plume
Shall flap you in the eyes when you look o'er me.

HENRY. Bold boy !—He makes a cock-horse of my
truncheon

When he can snatch it ; and will make me, too,
Bear him about the chamber on my back
When Dick and he play kings ; then both will mount
And lead their jaded father such a time !
You'd laugh to see the round-faced little villains,
How earnest they're about it !—You are a father
Too, Cousin !

CLARE. Yes, but not an o'er-indulgent.—
Mark how his kingling-ship strides through the hall !

HENRY. He's proud of his great yesterday ; when
Gwyneth
Prince of North Wales, and Rheese of South, did homage
At Woodstock, to us both as suzerains.
The memory glads even me ; 'twas a white day,
And promises long peace : that Scotland's king,

Malcolm the Maiden, likewise, should bow down
 Before my throne, and give his brother David
 As hostage for his faith—yes, all this fill'd
 My cup of joy to overflowing. France
 Hates us, but dreads; and hoists her ensign pale
 Begging for truce, where late her oriflamme
 Hung dripping o'er War's bed its bloody sheet.
 Now shall my subjects, like myself, throw by
 Contention's pillow, set with iron thorns,
 And rest from home as well as foreign brawls.—
 My Lord Justiciary!—

[To him.]

We must reform
 The Courts; look you to that, Richard de Lucy!
 Justice, not blind, nor with both eyes a-squint
 As they are deem'd, but even and lustrous-bright,
 Shall fix their cold orbs on all things beneath her,
 With thorough-piercing rays, like winter stars,
 And not less pure from earthly influence.
 Plantagenet will be *Pater Patriæ*.—
 My Lord High Constable!—

[To him.]

Let Commissioners
 Take census of all knights' lands which were known
 Under my grandsire Harry Beauclerc; state
 The services of each due to the crown,—
 Their name, their neighbourhood, their punctual nature;
 That so we may, at once and without fail,
 As Paul's bell sets the curfew all a-tolling,
 Summon the realm's strength to defend its rights.

DE BOHUN. 'Twill be a work like Domesday-Book, or
 better!

HENRY. But most we must restrain those sacred robbers—
 Those cowl'd and hooded highwaymen, the priests,
 Who fright my lieges, with the deadliest threats,
 Out of their coin, for venial faults; those Jews
 In Christian gaberdines, whose belts of rope
 Should be about their necks, and not their middles;
 Who drain the poor man's purse, for penances
 And absolutions, till it hang as meagre
 As a dried eel-skin, and himself scarce fatter.
 They, by this means, more taxes raise, 'fore heaven,
 Than come to our Exchequer!—What say you,
 Glanville, our jurist deep?

GLANVILLE. Their bold rapacity
 Stops not at threats; nor their licentiousness

At love of money. My report saith here,

[*Taking out a scroll.*]

An hundred murders, besides rapt and thefts,
Have been, by priests alone, committed, since
Primo Henrici Secundi to this present—
I would say since your Majesty's accession—
That's scarce a dozen years. This Clerk, to wit,
Of Worcester, now before the Court, at first
Seduced the daughter, and then slew the sire—

HENRY. Yet these hot sons o' the Church will have him
stand
Before their loose tribunal! to amerce him
Perchance in one cup less of wine per day
Out of his flagon—that themselves may sin
And suffer at like rate!—It shall not be!

DE EYNSFORD. Fain would the Mitre jostle with the
Crown.

HENRY. Then let the weaker vessel of the two
Be crack'd, be crush'd to dust, though it be mine!
No! that bold rivalry must have an end;
Now is the time, now while my own Archbishop
Is aidant and abettant—

DE EYNSFORD. Here he comes.

HENRY. Good! Make him broad way for his suite and
train,
Until he stand before us.

*Enter BECKET in monk's apparel, a small crucifix in his
hands; attended by GRYPE.*

Welcome, our Chancellor!
Our Primate, and chief Dignitary of the Crown!—
(*Seeing him*). Hey. Thomas?—No?—My lord!—Your
Grace!—how's this?

Are we to masquerade it o'er again,
By day as well as night?—What means this drugget?
A shirt too of black horse-hair that peeps out
Coily beneath his tunic! and clog-slippers
To sheathe his hoseless feet!—Where shall I find
Thomas à Becket under all these weeds?

BECKET. He will be seen anon.

HENRY. Thou'rt in eclipse.
Show forth thy honest face again!—Thou who
Wert wont to look so boon, and meet thy king
With aspect shining in the oil of gladness,

And such a flush of fervour on thy cheek
That every feature melted in the smile,—
Wherefore this face of adamant to me now?

BECKET. I am not what I was!

HENRY. What! not my Chancellor?

BECKET.

No more, my liege:

I come to render up that worldly office
So ill-beseeming one now minister
But to the King of Kings—Pray you, receive it.

[Surrendering his staff of office.]

HENRY. Ay? cast your staff official from you thus,
Without consulting me?

BECKET.

Sir, even so:

I did consult two things which cannot err,—
My conscience and this blessed crucifix.

[Kisses it.]

HENRY. Ha!—Has a serpent crept from out the dust
Up my throne-steps to sting me i' the back,
And slide away under the altar then?

BECKET. You do mistake me much: I have put off
My former self as worse than childishness,
The pomp and pride of state, the carnal mass
Of sin that swell'd most hideous on my shoulders
Bending me to the earth: I would become
By prayer, self-discipline, and mortification,
In very deed the consecrated thing
I am in name. But this is all! My love,
Allegiance, loyalty, are what they were,
And should be, still.

HENRY.

“You do mistake me much”—

“A consecrated thing”—and “that is all”—

Then prithee, Heart's-Ease! since you show two faces
Under one hood—changed, and not changed—let's have
Some proof you are the man we spoke with yesterday:
The trial of that Clerk comes on at noon
Before our Bench—is it not so?

BECKET.

My liege,

I have considered—much—upon the matter—

HENRY. Ay, with your conscience and your crucifix,
Which you took but small counsel of before!—
Hypocrite!

BECKET. Nay, most faithful, frank, and fair!
See you how innocent am I of this:
Here is a rescript of Archbishop Theobald
(And I must yield unto so good a man!)

Inhibiting the trial of all priests
Before profane tribunals.

HENRY. That I gave you
Admitted, not inhibited, false monk!

BECKET. But this another is, and later one.—
Good Richard, show his Majesty the parchment

[To GRYPE, *who shows it*,
Sign'd by my predecessor, and given up
Even with the ghost.

HENRY. Fitz-Urse, I say! Fitz-Urse?

FITZ-URSE. Dread sire, I fear 'tis so: that villain Gryme,
Your Grace's confidant, betray'd his trust,
And in the old man's moments of last weakness
(I being shut out as one of the profane)
He got this ready deed Death's signature,
Incapable of correction or erasement,
And gave 't to Becket.

BECKET. Becket, thou insolent!
Know who I am—beneath the King alone,
And him but in a temporal sense—above
Even him, as representative of St. Peter,
And God's vice-gerent on this English earth.

CLARE (*to GLANVILLE*). I thought humility sat heavy
on him,
So off he throws it—like a sin!

GLANVILLE. He's evidence
Against himself. Mark how the King's eye glitters!

HENRY. Have I then thrust my most delicious sops
Into the mouth of an ungrateful dog
That turns and strives to tear the hand which fed him?—
Well then, our Saxon proxy of St. Peter,
To give thee further time for prayer, full swing
For self-disciplinane (which I confess
Thou hast great need of!) here thou art relieved
Of that most duteous office, and much worldly,
The Arch-deaconship—thou 'lt find perchance in this
Some taste of mortification to begin with!

BECKET. My liege, the archdeaconry is a church hold-
ing—

HENRY. By Mahound, you say well! and therefore shall
A churchman have it:—Geoffrey Radel, ha?

RADEL. Sire.

HENRY. Be the new archdeacon of Canterbury.—
Farewell, Saint Thomas!—Ply your beads and scourge

Fast as you please : we will not stay to lett you !

[*Exeunt King and Courtiers.*]

BECKET. My heartiest hate, and hater, made archdeacon
Of my own See !—that is a thorn which gores,
Not merely pricks the side !—Archdeacon ? rather
Arch-devil !—He will raise a hurricane
To rock my belfries—yea, will ride it too !
But let him fear a shower of blood may lay it,
From his own sides !—This fate of grandeur, I
Look'd for ; the sky-ascending bird becomes
The plainer mark. Why, hypocrite ?—hypocrite !
Were not my services unto the King
Sincerest, whilst I was his servant ? Now
That I am servant of the Church alone,
Should they not be sincere to it ? His fault,
If foe to it, he thus will make him mine !
No man can serve two masters,—save they be
At one !—Am I to blame that loftier steps
Give larger views, and clear from mists, through which
Haply I err'd where they are thick below ?—
Howe'er he choose to reason it, let him !—Here
He hath mark'd out the mortal lists, and trumpeted
Himself to the high combat ; he hath thrown
His glove even in my cheek ! Becket may chance
Return it with a gauntlet, that shall fall
Upon him like an iron meteor !—
I can divine him thoroughly, and his purposes !
This king delves hard beneath St. Peter's rock ;
But ere it sink an inch, the mighty coign
Shall bruise him, past more sapping, with its shoulder !
We are upon the eve of chances strange ;
Heaven will defend its own !

Scene VI.

A Street in London. FITZ-URSE and FIER-À-BRAS.

FITZ-URSE. Spare not the rowel, good Sir Mottram !
Speed

To Clifford Castle, and fetch thence as swift
Thy precious charge, girt with a loyal band
Of lusty gentlemen, for grace and guard,
To Woodstock, to the Labyrinth ; of that,

As of the Lady's self, thou art made Warder.

FIER-À-BRAS. Thou 'rt the king's under-voice; 'tis he that speaks?

FITZ-URSE. He! (*Showing a signet.*)

Fail in nought: thou know'st his fiery humour
When his strong will is foil'd; though he be else
So mild of mood and soothable.

FIER-À-BRAS. Gramercy!

I love not dallying with the lion's beard
Though he's a generous beast!—it has been pluck'd too,
Sorely of late.—I would I were an arrow! [*Going.*]

FITZ-URSE. You'd miss your mark then! stay a pace.
take this,— [*Giving a letter.*]

Else will the turtle-dove scarce trust herself
I' the clutches of so grim a kite—flee! flee!

[*Exit FIER-À-BRAS.*]

Her father sickens, and fierce Eleanor threatens,
Or she would never leave her brake at Clifford
For all this Woodstock cooing of the king!—
Plague on 't! what trouble and lost time to lay
Love's ambush! If not all beset with flowers,
And a plush alley made to 't for her feet,
Dove-calls to lure her, streams to purl persuasion,
Nice-footed Woman will not step into 't!
She will sin daintily, be humour'd to 't,
Or take huff, and not sin at all! She loves
The pleasant way to 't more than the place itself!
When you find Reginald Fitz-Urse employ'd
Digging a pitfall for a fawn to pet,
May he be caught himself!—Plague on the foolery! [*Exit.*]

ACT III.

Scene I.

The Base-court of the Palace.

Enter DE MORVILLE and DE TRACI, meeting JOHN OF SALISBURY and WALTER MAPES.

DE TRACI. Hey, Master Bookworms! have ye heard the news—the wonderful news?

MAPES. Heard it forsooth?—had I no more ears than a fish, I must have heard it. Hath it not stricken the whole

city aghast, like an earthquake? All London is in the streets; yet who told it me I cannot guess, for every one seemed dumbfounded!

JOHN OF S. I am sorry the Primate has gone so far.

DE TRACI. Ay, ay, here's a feat indeed!—put this in your next Romance, Master Walter! put this in your “Sang-Real,” or what d’ye call it?

DE MORVILLE. Let it be *Sang-episcopal*, and no Romance, if you love me!

MAPES. Nay, by King Arthur and all his Knights! there will be some dragon’s blood spilt at all events. Both are such fire-breathers!

JOHN OF S. But is the tale as true as it is new? Hath he indeed cited into Court the great Earl of Clare, cousin and friend to the king? and launched excommunication against William de Eynsford, as puissant a knight as ever wore spurs, and as proud a baron as ever tramped over drawbridge on steed shod with silver?

DE MORVILLE. No less true than portentous. Becket was born for a soldier, though he has turned out but a bishop. Seeing battle inevitable he strikes the first blow, and if not a crusher ’tis a confounder.

MAPES. What! he lays church-claim to Tunbridge-Castle?

DE MORVILLE. Ay, “cousin Clare’s” castle, as an apanage of his own diocese; and his pet-incumbent being ejected by Sir William, head-foremost, from some church—I forget its name—he ejects Sir William, *sans cérémonie*, from all churches whatsoever!

MAPES. How does the king take this?—does he not rage, foam, call down the devil’s blessing upon Becket?

DE TRACI. Oh, sir, no torrent half so still! no cataract is quieter!—Ha! ha! ha! ha!—how goes the *chanson*, Walter the Jongleur?—thus?

(Sings.) Taillefer, qui très-bien chantoit,
Sur un cheval qui tôt alloit,
Devant eux alloit chantant
De Charlemagne et de Rolant,
Et d'Olivier de Vassaux,
Qui moururent en Roncevaux!

MAPES (to JOHN OF S.). Mark this French popinjay:
he sees the air
Grow clouded with thick shafts of death, yet still
Chatters and hops and sings!

JOHN OF S.
As heels!

Ay, light of heart

MAPES. Yea, and as light of head as either!—
Sir Hugh, 'twill be a bustle!—'Twere more strange
The king should not be vex'd, than vex'd beyond
All measure. He has been disappointed much!

DE MORVILLE. His swan has turn'd a rank wild-goose!

MAPES. Or rather
His duck has turn'd a fire-drake!—Welcome. Peter!

Enter PETER OF BLOIS.

Run not so fast, good brother-scribe!—Hast thou too
Been frightened by this thunder-storm just burst
As broad as England, out of thy calm cell?

PETER. Mary, my wits are so distract, I run
Two ways at once.—and all ways but the right!
I wish'd to seek the father of the flock,
Th' Archbishop.—and find me i' the lion's den!

DE MORVILLE. Alas, poor sheep!

PETER. Pray tell me, have the sun
And moon not come together—clash?

DE MORVILLE. Thou 'lt see
The whole land cover'd with their fiery splinters,
Ere long, be sure of it! Dost thou not feel
The air about thee glow with agitation?

PETER. Methinks my ears do feel a little hot!

MAPES. I'll make them tingle What say'st thou for
thy patron?

Thou 'dst ever have it he was too immersed
I' the fount of England's Helicon; or entangled
In the fine meshes of philosophy;
Given up to science mathematical,
Arithmetic, astrology, and so forth;
To rhetoric, logic, ethic, and to law,
Besides those gallant studies, wit conceits,
We lighter gentry deem of weight: why, man!
Those maggots of his brain are very snakes,
Which one hot day has brought forth ready-fang'd
And wing'd, to be the plague of this poor realm!

PETER. Thy crany seems something worm-eaten too,
And leaks apace; or warm imagination
Hath crack'd thy poet skull, and out fly crotchets!
But Walter, all thy volatile grubs o' the brain

Are harmless—only to thyself !

MAPES. Heaven grant
The same may still be said of Becket's too,
Harmless,—save to himself !

JOHN OF S. A truce of tongues !—
But what will come—what can—except vast ill,
From this fierce struggle between Church and State ?
Which of these wrestling Titans shall be thrown ?

PETER. England's too little to contain them both,
I fear—I fear !

MAPES. How does the Primate bear him
During this rout ?

DE MORVILLE. I've come from him but now :
My message was, that he might please recal
His rash anathema against De Eynsford,
As ne'er such sentence has been, since the Conquest,
Fulmined without fore-notice to the king.

MAPES. Well, how demean'd he him ?

DE MORVILLE. Meek as a nun.

MAPES. Nay, but in very truth ?

DE MORVILLE. In downright truth !
He neither stamp'd, nor champ'd, nor raved, nor swore,—
Except by St. Bartholomew's holy thumb,
Which he (who whilome play'd as lief with dice
Of dead saint's bone, as ivory !) now caresses
Linnet-like in his breast, and kisses oft
And soft, as he e'er did sweet sinner's hand !—
No, sir ! he sucks his tooth, and sends me back
With this submiss and placable reply—
His humble service, 'twas not for the king
To tell him whom he should absolve, or whom
Pronounce accursèd.

MAPES. An ungracious speech !

DE TRACI. I say unmannerly ! most unpolite !—

(Sings.) Telle est coutume de bourgeois,
N'en verrez guères de courtois !

His father was a London cit and his mother a Syrian bond-
slave : where should he get good-breeding ?

DE MORVILLE. The saucy shaveling ! Were it left to
me, I'd so mash his lips together with a blow of my steel
glove, they should no more separate again than if Death
had glued them into one—the traitor !

JOHN OF S. Nay, not a traitor ; 'tis too hard a word.

Enter BRITO.

BRITO. Gentlemen, to the King!

DE MORVILLE and DE TRACI. We're with him!

[Exeunt these and BRITO.]

PETER. The men of war gone!—what will become of us?

MAPES. We have nothing to do but sit agape at each other and croak, like a congregation of toads round a pool—till we are squash'd into mummy by a shower of missiles.

PETER. Saint Longinus preserve us!

JOHN OF S. Why seek we not our calm, secluded cells.
And there in study or dim meditation
Consume the soul-improving hours? Let death
Come when it will, and how it will, what matter?
Since it will come at last!—These mad turmoils
Of the outer world, what are they unto us
But noise of Centaurs and of Savages
Fighting ev'n at their feasts?—For idle Courts,
The mountain-shaded moors where nothing stirs
Save the wild daffodil or crisped fern
Or long lithe broom that flows with every breeze,
Or thistlebeard scarce wafted on, less make
A melancholy desert unto me:
The murmuring branches and the flowers that kiss
Each other's ear in talk, please me far more
Than whisperers of follies, hearers of them,
Or those who lay their fond heads on your neck
But to void scandalous venom there at ease:
For blustering camps, I love the liquid brawl
Of rivulets, the caw of rooks, much better;
Yea, than the lisp of a Circean dame
Or babble of a living doll, had rather
Hear the soft winnowing of a pigeon's wing
As it doth circle round its dovecote o'er me;
And fain this challenge proud of trumps would change
For sound of shepherd pipe or village bell:
Would'st thou not, Peter?

PETER. Yes,—so I'll away
To the Archbishop's palace!

[Exit.]

MAPES. Ha! ha! ha! the village-bell?—the dinner-bell, he thought you spoke of! Among all flowers 'tis the Canterbury bells he is most in love with: these are the rural objects which give Peter a taste for the country!

JOHN OF S. He is a Frenchman too!—I'll to my dormi-

tory, and finish my "Contemptibilities of Courts." [*Exit.*

MAPES. And I as his chaplain must attend the king, to preach patience, and give him absolution for his oaths—after each repentance. [*Exit.*

Scene II.

The King's Closet.

HENRY enters, and sets down his cap.

This bonnet galls me : 'tis too tight—or stiff—
Or ire hath swoln my brow.—Who could be calm ?
A hypocrite ! an upstart ! an arch-traitor !
Rebel ! apostate from his civil faith !
But worse—far worse ! false-hearted to his friend !—
And such a friend ! who made him all he is,
Far more than he should be !—O soft of brain !
My lady-mother, Empress Maud, was right
When she did warn me 'gainst this wily priest ;
But women are suspicious where they hate
As credulous where they love ; I did not trust her :
That was o'er-wisdom ! Men themselves
Affection oft makes womanish,—nay weaker !
Friendship like love is folly, and the fervider
The blinder !—How he hath illuded me !
I might have known his bold and dangerous nature
When at Toulouse, with vehement desire,
He urged me lay imprisoning hands upon
The person of my suzerain, there besieged,
Louis of France ; this show'd how light he deem'd
Of fealty and firm devoir to kings.
What ! he will have his rochet for a flag
Flaunt over Tunbridge Castle ? Ay, and hurl
Heaven's own stored bolts, with hand unscrupulous
As he would fling a quoit, 'gainst whom he will ?—
Becket, bethink thee : that same Hill of Fortune
Thou clomb'st so fast by the precipitous side
And takest high airs upon, hath broke more necks
Than Rock Tarpeian or Leucadian !
'Twere safer to have mounted by the slope,
And kept thy senses steady !—Thou would'st fain
Play Dunstan o'er again, but we'll enact
No Edwy, no girl-king !—Be sure of it.—

Now ere we buckle us to this business,
One thought for my fair Rosamond. Poor bird!
I must weave close thy verdant Woodstock bower,
And make thy prison blissful as secure;
Fitz-Urse hath had command. There is a Labyrinth
Of marbled halls and rooms; of orchard walks,
Fountains and freshening streams and bright parterres,
All hidden in a dell, and umbraged o'er
With the huge crests of brow-commingled trees,
Disposed in such erroneous ordinance
As leads all progress retrograde, and makes
The intruder quaintly turn himself still out.
It was devised by my late Chancellor,—
These Churchmen ever were great architects,
Planners and plotters—maledictions on them!—
But will at least serve now my dearest need.
The she-hawk is less keen to track her prey,
Less fell to swoop upon it, than is Eleanor
On her that flees for shelter to my bosom.
Lord Walter is fall'n sick, they say—death-sick;
He hath no masculine heir; so if he die
His gentle daughter will, by right of kings
And custom of the realm, become my ward,
Her fortune and her fate be in my hand:
Perchance I scarce had else been chosen protector,
Or she at Woodstock now. 'Tis well even so!
'Twill be my refuge too from toils of state
And broils of home: not a mere dull repose,
But sweet intoxication of delight
With one whose gracious beauty is a frame
Only to close in far more precious charms,
Exquisite tastes, refined sense, and wit
Which once shone forth with playful lustre, till
Of late, alas! bedimm'd too oft with tears.
I must restore her by all fondest means
Unto her peaceful self and placid cheer,
Or the sweet Rose I've gather'd to my breast
Will die there with the very warmth it feels.—
Much is before me. Now to Clarendon,
And bend my haughty Primate till he kiss
His own feet, if not mine.—Ho! there—

Enter Knights of the Body, and MAPES.

Arm, gentlemen!

Make yourselves steel from top to toe, and bear
Your battle-axes bright. Let a stout score
Of men-at-arms attend us.— [Exeunt Knights.

Walter Mapes,

Go you to Bishop Folliott, our good friend,
Say he will ride with us to Clarendon.

No quips nor quillets now, sir; make no legs,
But use them nimbly rather than your tongue,
As we have told you!— [Exit MAPES.

Wit hits all things nicely

But the right times; it will be always shooting!—
Now my ex-Chancellor! [Exit.

Scene III.

An Alcove at the Labyrinth.

DE CLIFFORD, *in a chair, sick.* ROSAMOND *attending him.*

DE CLIFFORD. No, no, there is no hope, fond child!
for me:

The sun of my life's day is in the west,
And shortly will go down!

ROSAMOND. Droop not, my father!
Let not the heavy spirit sink the flesh
To earth before its time!—This journey sure
Hath shaken you over-much?

DE CLIFFORD. Not it! not it!
I follow'd at full easy pace: the change
Took me so far from the grave-side at home;
That's all!—for here's another at my feet.

ROSAMOND. Think less on Death, and he'll think less
on thee,

Dear sir!—There's medicine that the mind may minister
To the afflicted clay, its partner frail,—
A hopeful spirit!—'tis the best restorative!
Most life-giving Elixir!—The good Nuns
Who taught me the whole little that I know,
As art's choice secret taught me this. Look up!
Look on thy Rosamond, thy bower-maiden,
Look in her brightening face and learn its smile!

DE CLIFFORD. I do look on thee—as my Minist'ring
Angel,
That soothes, but cannot save!—And I do smile

To see thy vain dissembling with thyself
Of the sad truth thou know'st at heart—Now, now
Put up thy wings to hide thine eyes, and weep !

ROSAMOND. I'll not believe 't ! It can—shall, not be true !—

The king's physician will be here anon,
A learned leech who studied with the Moors,
He is infallible !—Meanwhile this air
Which keeps the woods so green, the birds so gay,
The flowers so blooming-fresh, must revive thee :
Doth it not breathe most dulcet o'er thy brow ?
Full of most cordial balm, warmer, and friendlier
Than at the Cliff which overhangs the Ford
Where our bleak Castle stands ?

DE CLIFFORD. Ah Girl ! thou wert not
Born there, nor reared, as I ; else thou hadst loved
Those barren rocks like one of their young eagles !—
Bred up at Godstowe Nunnery hard by,
Thou, like the hunted coney, fain return'st
To thy old covert here, howe'er so fatal !

ROSAMOND. I thought it might preserve thee at the least,
If none else.—O dear father ! call me not
Cold-hearted to the cradle of my sires !
'Twas but in thy health's cause that I dispraised it.
How oft I've ranged o'er those far-sighted peaks,
Gazing as full-eyed as the mountain-roe
On the great prospect, feeding but on its beauty,
Rude pasture though it be ! How long stood mute,
Or like a willow whispering to myself,
Down by the stream who swallows his own roar
In his deep gorge, dread moat ! which Nature delved
With course irregular round our fortress-hill.

DE CLIFFORD. My cloud-hung aerie !—blank for every
storm,
And baffler of it !—Ocean bursts to spray
On the firm rock, and so to hurtless showers,
Heaven's deluge upon thee !—You draw the picture
Featly, my girl !

ROSAMOND. 'Tis graven trait for trait
Upon my heart.—I'm a De Clifford too,
Though last, least, lowest ! Even to girlish me
Stern Nature hath her terrible charms sublime.

DE CLIFFORD. Better than these slight bowers !

ROSAMOND. O far other !

DE CLIFFORD. It warms my veins like spiced wine to
see thee

Swell thy young throat as a sweet bird, and praise
Thy dwelling in the wilderness!—Go on:
Thou'rt full of it.

ROSAMOND. I see it now before me,
Rearing its bulk precipitous from the strand.
From crag to steepy crag the eye mounts up,
Although the foot may not, those giant stairs
Listed with verdure, fathoms aloft!

DE CLIFFORD. A bow-shot
Full—at the least!

ROSAMOND. Those air-suspended eaglets
Soar, far beneath the summit, and like rooks
'Gainst abbey walls, scream hovering at their nests,
Within its rifted face: Pines on its ledges
Waver like plumes; and yon small patch of briars
Like blustry mosses, sway in the wild wind
You cannot hear sing through them.

DE CLIFFORD. O but they do
Whistle most shrill!

ROSAMOND. Heightening the Cliff's tall front
Sits our huge Castle, like a crown of towers;
Their rugged coigns, grey jewels! in the beam
Smooth glittering; whilst o'er those battlements
Darker than thunderclouds, the warder's lance
Peeps like a rising star!

DE CLIFFORD. Ay, and my pennon
Upon the Keep itself?—

ROSAMOND. Blazons the sky
With flickering hues, broad Streamer of the North,
And blends them with the rainbow's!

DE CLIFFORD. As brief-lived
Will now be all its bravery!—Yet it brings
Me back some youth to think of my past days.
And my loved birth-place!—But I'm better here,
I am, my child!—Ay, ay, proud Clifford Castle!
Thou like thy master nodd'st unto thy fall,
And soon like him wilt moulder down to dust!

ROSAMOND. Alas! alas! both may live long!—

DE CLIFFORD. Proud fortress!
I have no son, no heir who can uphold
Thy feudal strength and grandeur with his own:
Thou'rt but the changeful birthright of the winds

From henceforth, or their reckless tenancy!
 Foul ravens will thy ruins hoar inherit,
 The wildcat litter there, the Moon alone
 With vacant gleam light up thy roofless hall,
 Or smile, pale Lady! through thy lattices :
 Along thy festive floors will reptiles creep
 With slimy trails, and make vile sport in corners,
 Sole revellers here! whilst the more brutish kind
 Graze thy rank courts, or use thy stalls, which echoed
 The war-horse neighing 'mid his amber corn.
 As mangers bone-bestrewn and dens to rot in!

ROSAMOND. Let's home, my father! let us once more
 home!

Enter FIER-À-BRAS.

DE CLIFFORD. Noble Sir Warder!—

FIER-À-BRAS. Greeting from the King;
 Who promises, if business hold him not,
 To sup at Woodstock Palace, and to-morrow
 Visit De Clifford with his noble Daughter.

DE CLIFFORD. We thank his Majesty! Save you, Sir
 Mottram! [*Exit FIER-À-BRAS.*]

No, thou soft-passion'd creature! thou self-sacrifice,
 Still offering up thy life for those thou lovest,
 We will not home again, because my follies
 Forsooth talk louder than thy gentle wisdom.
 The she-wolf shall not ravin my poor lamb
 That would, too fondly, follow me to the wilds
 From its warm fold,—and I o'er-weak to save it!
 Thou camest here for my cause, dreading thyself
 The insidious wiles of love more than of hate,
 Henry than Eleanor: but listen, dear-one!
 Whether I live,—as juggling hope suggests
 To thy most cheatable affection,—
 Some little time, or die—Nay, cease thy tears,
 And listen: thou wilt have defender none
 Against thy willing blood-quaffer the Queen,
 Except his Majesty. Besides, me dead,
 Thou 'lt be his Ward, and he can then enjoy
 His will of all thou hast, in thy despite,
 Thy lands, thy tenements, thy gold, thy jewels,
 The virgin treasure of thy beauty.—all!
 Such is the royal licence of these times,
 At least if might makes not the right, it takes it,

Fatal no less to thee!—

ROSAMOND. Then I'll return
To Godstowe Convent, and give up at once
All, with the world,—except what I prize more.
They love me there, and will with matron arms
Receive their filial Novice back again.

DE CLIFFORD. Novice in sooth thou art!—Each Con-
vent, girl!

Is but a home-preserve of game for kings,
A coop where liquorish Barons fat betimes
Their fowls of whiter meat; and ruffian losels
Poach—when the glutton lord o' the manor sleeps!
Go not thou back to Godstowe: 'tis in vain!
The grating is no bar, the shrine no sanctum,
The veil itself to dead-cold Chastity
No shroud from violating eyes, no cyprus
Wherein her pure composèd limbs may keep
Their icy form and bloodless tint, untouch'd,
Unstain'd by sacrilegious hands! They would
Rife a heaven-descended Saint, if tangible,
Who stood for adoration on the altar!

ROSAMOND. I know the times are fearful.

DE CLIFFORD.

Better far

Than trust their lawlessness, trust to his love
Who has oft sworn thee his next Queen. Dame Eleanor,—
Besides that she might mother thee in years,—
Drinks a slow poison daily—enviousness!

ROSAMOND. His Majesty, though generous, most sincere
Of purpose—

DE CLIFFORD. Move not then, I say, his pride
By seeming doubt; nor stir and thwart at once
His hot desires by over-coyness. Be
Trustful, and thou wilt make him more trust-worthy.
Mine own ambition prompted me before
To weave the bond between ye, as a cord
Whereby to climb up silkily myself
Unto dame Fortune's chamber of intrigue:
But now my love for thee—my fears—my hopes—
Ambitious hopes for thee alone, my child!—
Prompt the same counsel. Do not break that bond:
'Twill be a cable to thy safest mooring
In the fierce storm which shall take up my dirge
And fill the land with sighs.

ROSAMOND.

What mean you, Sir?

DE CLIFFORD. I am already half i' the other world
And catch a glimpse of fate !—It shall be so !
England will soon be rent from sea to sea,
And throne and altar slide to the abyss :—
Now lead me in, for I am faint and chill.

ROSAMOND. O for this sluggard leech !—he crawls,
though life
Is in his lips !

DE CLIFFORD. And death too !—It will come
Quickly enough without him !

ROSAMOND. He will give you
Wormwood, if you're so bitter. Come, you jest—
That's well ! There's hope when the heart laughs,
Even though the brow be grave.—Lean on me, Sir !
[*Exeunt.*]

Scene IV.

A walk in the Labyrinth.

Enter a Physician blindfold, led by GABEL.

PHYSICIAN. Am I to go much farther in the dark ?

GABEL. Only one other round, and a quirk, Sir.

PHYSICIAN. Bless me I think I have gone as many as an
ass in a mill !—This muffling is worse than that of a
Moorish damsel, for she at least has the use of her eyes :
mine are no more use to me than if they were glazed with
green lead like a stuffed owl's.

GABEL. Come on, doctor : don't hurt that post with
your head. What a pity !

PHYSICIAN. Pity ! pity you didn't speak a little sooner !—
Pity forsooth ?

GABEL. Ay, pity on my life Sir, that such a learned
head as yours should have got such a crack !

PHYSICIAN. Take care it happen not again, or thy own
numbskull shall get a crack, and that about the nape of the
neck too !—'Tis hanging-matter to mistreat a man of my
importance, let me assure thee.

GABEL. Lord, Sir, are you a man of importance ? I
never could ha' guessed it !—Come on again—Stoop, Sir,
like a goose under a gate, stoop !
[*Exeunt.*]

Scene changes to an Inner Court. Re-enter Physician and GABEL.

GABEL. You are to stand here, Sir, awhile, by yourself, please you Master man of importance!

PHYSICIAN. What, still in the dark!

GABEL. Why yes, doctor; every dunce can stand in the dark—'tis only shutting your eyes and looking straight forward before you. It is my way, and a shrewd one, trust me.

PHYSICIAN. I do believe thou art skilful in standing i' the dark!—Get thee gone, for a perfect dunce! and send me a leader who is not absolute knave as well.

GABEL. If he is to be found, with all haste doctor! [*Exit.*]

PHYSICIAN. Pestiferous lout!—There is in simple-hood Ofttimes a sleek-soft, sleepy cunningness Which moves more bile than roguery direct. But I've that here perchance will bring ye begging To Charity's bleak door, from this warm berth, For swine's soup and black bread!—I can avenge My sovereign-queen and self at the same time; 'Tis good craft to hit two birds with one bolt, Though but a sparrow and a cock o' the woods.—Mum! I hear ringing footsteps on the stones, Heavy as hammers' clang; some horse curvets Hither upon two legs—

Enter FIER-À-BRAS.

FIER-À-BRAS. Physician, follow me.

PHYSICIAN. What! in these winkers, Clamped on me, like a hoop about a hogshead?

FIER-À-BRAS. Take this strong rein into thy hand: now follow!

PHYSICIAN. O Avicen! thy son playing bo-peep!—Hold fast, good sir, or I shall fall on my sinciput. [*Exeunt.*]

Scene V.

The Court before King's-Manour Palace, Clarendon. A Sentinel on guard. Several persons assembled. JOHN OF OXFORD and GEOFFREY RADEL.

JOHN OF O. What breeds the Council better than debate I marvel? It sits long.

RADEL. Would it were up!
The wind is icy-keen within this court.—

Hey ! here comes Walter all a-muck !—Wiap up !
It blows steel-needles !—

Enter MAPES as from the Council Room. After him
DE BROKE.

MAPES. Pewh ! a delicate storm
To that within !—Could'st stretch thy neck
Door-wards. and yon tall axe-man not behead thee,
Thou'dst hear a storm indeed !

JOHN OF O. We have heard much tumult.

RADEL. Tell us, good Walter ! what is 't like ?

MAPES. What like ?

The roll of thunder, roar of seas, and groan
Of heart-burnt mountains, crash of cataracts,
All mingled dense as the dark angels' cry
Of mutual torment ; or those threatening voices
From Chaos 'gainst Creation, yell'd by night,
Which make the firm stars tremble in their spheres.

JOHN OF O. Enlisht,—a mighty hubbub.

MAPES. I do assure you—

The roof rebounds as from a Cyclops' forge
At full-sledge work above it ; you expect
The stones to fall each moment on your head—

JOHN OF O. Well, well ! but does the Primate yield ?

MAPES. Our Bishops

Stand front to front as on a chess-board ; some
Are the King's bishops, some the Archbishop's bishops :
These be the fiery tongues that make the blaze
Hottest, and keep the fiercest bicker up ;
To which the laity's is but lambent flame
Crackling and spitting. These, claw'd close together,
As mill-wheels tooth in tooth, each urges on
His giddy-pated neighbour, shoulders him,
Kisses him hatefully with bespattering lips,
Or stares quite mute with ire.

DE BROKE. Furies in frocks !

MAPES. I marvel the walls bilge not, with so much
Foul fluency as swags within them.—Peter !

Enter PETER OF BLOIS.

What news ? what news ? how goes it on ? is't done ?

PETER. 'Tis done—and undone—we are all undone !
I know not what ! They say there are no wolves
In England since the Conquest—there's a den of them !

JOHN OF O. But tell us, will the Archbishop brave it out,
So obstinate?

PETER. He stands like twice his size,
The sole immovable thing in that commotion:

MAPES. I think he hath a cloven hoof, to stand
So firm, on but two legs!

PETER. I fear he'll have
What's worse.—a cloven head!

JOHN OF O. Doth the king speak?

MAPES. The king speaks thunder-claps; and every word
Blasts where it strikes!—'Tis fearful even to friends.

DE BROKE. I ne'er saw steed upon the edge of battle
With such a bloodshot eye or nostril broader!

Methinks the very fierceness of his glance
Cuts like a shining sword.

PETER. There will be mischief:
Heaven guard his grace, the Primate!

SENTINEL. *Haro! Haro!*

[FITZ-URSE, DE MORVILLE, DE TRACI, BRITO, *with
men-at-arms, rush across the hall, their battle-
axes, and enter the hall.* DE BROKE joins them.

MAPES. 'Dame! this looks serious.

JOHN OF O. Will they stain their souls
With such a crimson and redeemless sin
As murder of God's High-Priest? It is horrible!

MAPES. What care these swashing blades? One thing
to them

High-priest or heretic! Are not their acts
All of the one blush-colour? Their most innocent,
Rapine and ravishment! Men bred up in blood.
They shed it free as wine.

JOHN OF O. A Christless race!

PETER. Mapes, jest not now:—Can their thick senses,
judge you,
Tell the fine difference 'tween sacred priest-flesh
And popular carrion?

MAPES. Not, though that were smoked
In the rich fume o' the chalice 'till it smell'd
A whole aisle off!

PETER. *Ventre!*—I am a priest!—
I'll back to Blois!—*Courez, mes enfans! courez!*—
Sauve qui peut!

[*Runs off.*

MAPES. Ha! ha! ha!

Are lords who crave admittance.

BECKET. I'll not see them :
 Begging-faced Bishops ! paupers for pity's dole !

GRYME. Your very venerable Grace ! I spy
 A red broad hat, and leopard crest, among them.

BECKET. O ! 'tis the Cardinal and the Uncle of the King :
 Let them come in ! (*Exit GRYME.*) This seems respect at
 least.

Enter CARDINAL PHILIP, EARL OF CORNWALL, *and the*
 GRAND PRIOR.

CARDINAL. Highest and mightiest Prelate of the realm,
 We come, negotiators of Peace, if not
 Plenipotential to conclude it, hoping
 Your Grace is thereto well disposed.

BECKET. Why not,
 Most Eminent ? Within me all is calm
 As the hushed sea between his ebb and flood,
 Balancing when to roll.—Wherefore should I
 Love not this halcyon state ?—love it not round me,
 Well as within me ? Can the sea less overwhelm
 When smooth than rough, the headlong who disturb
 The stillness of its pure and deepy bosom ?
 Kings—moonstruck kings ! may lash that sea to foam,
 But not my mildness. They upon its rage
 Their puerile chains will as successless throw
 As upon Becket's ire,—if ever roused !

CORNWALL. My lord ! my lord ! you take too much
 upon you—

BECKET. My lord ! my lord ! you take much more to
 say so !
 Who am I but the Sacerdotal King
 Of this great state ? who you ?—a king impossible !

CARDINAL. You do forget your halcyon calm.

BECKET. The ox
 Of quietest front sublime, may be yet stung
 To anger, by a gadfly ! What's your need with me ?

CORNWALL. If you are bland again, we would say thus—

BECKET. Cannot his Eminence, the Legate, speak ?
 'Twere best, methinks, on church affairs. I listen !

CORNWALL (*aside*). If this pride fall not, Lucifer's
 never did !

CARDINAL. Let me, in mine Italian humour, serve
 For spokesman, though unwilling, to this mission.—

It ne'er has been the policy of Rome
To play the cat's-paw.

CORNWALL (*aside*). No, the lion's rather
Making a prize of all !

CARDINAL. Nor meddle much
With the hot instruments of civil broils,
Except as mediator 'tween those who sway
Such utensils, (you'll pardon, on the feast
Of good St. Hilary, my lepid vein
Which means to soothe, not stir !)—Now, my dear lord,
Let me approach you in that blessed wise
Of Peace-maker. A little hear me, pray :
The Constitutions, called of Clarendon—

BECKET. Not so—they are not passed, wanting my sign!

CORNWALL (*aside*). How hushed a sea he is !

CARDINAL. Well then, these Articles
To be called Constitutions with your sign—

BECKET. Never !—What Sixteen Articles which make
The mitre a huge tassel to the crown !

—A bare appendage !—the grave Bishops merely
Chief foot-kissers of the King, not of the Pope,
Sole osculation, sacred and sublime !—

Which make all priests whate'er amenable
Like common subjects to the Common Laws,
And spiritual culprits even mount the block
Where secular caitiffs die ! O monstrous ! monstrous !
Most despot Articles which make the King
Head of the Church, supreme, unqualified,
Throughout his whole dominions !—'Tis impossible !
Can ne'er in England come to pass such things !

CARDINAL. My lord, you state them with too round
a mouth

Of eloquence, too loosely large ; at least
As we do understand them.

CORNWALL. They are no more
In substance than those which at Westminster
You gave assent to.

BECKET. Be't so ! Why repeat it ?
If it were given, 'twas given, and there's an end.

CORNWALL. Pardon me, humbly I beseech your grace,
But that assent was far too vague and general,
So boundless that it bound to nought at all !

BECKET. I'll give none other. That's a word of Fate !
[Retires.

GRAND PRIOR. O! miserable kingdom!

BECKET.

What wouldst have?

GRAND PRIOR. A patriot's wish! an old man's wish!—
peace! peace!

CORNWALL. A good man's thou mightst add—a wise
man's too!

BECKET. Ay, and a fool's as well! The idiot loves
To bask against a sunny wall his days,
With arms like dead boughs hanging, vacant eyes
Fixed on the straw he sees not, and his mouth
Gaping so idly it chops not the mess
Laid 'twixt his teeth: He wishes, and has, peace:
Is that to sample us?

CORNWALL. You are too keen
And subtle a logician to be coped with
By us, my lord. But there are reasoners
Upon the side of these same Articles,
You cannot easily silence.

BECKET.

Which be they?

CORNWALL. Three hundred broad-mouthed bugles,
whose loud blare
Echoing through each portcullis, will call up
The embodied Baronage of this realm, as one
Mail-clad Colossus.

BECKET. I call down another
More dread—the Angel of the English Church,
With thunders armed,—whose very breath will scorch
Your idol into ashes.

CARDINAL.

Brother, perpend!

You bring not king and kingdom under ban
Without the Legate's voice: you are but chorus
To his pre-eminent curse!

BECKET.

Ay, but that Legate

May be of other name than *Philip* then;
Of clime less out-land to us; and of mood
Less that of a good easy man than thine!

NORWICH (*to GRYME*). His Legateship had better have
continued

To pour some oil on these contentious waves,
And haply smoothen them.

GRYME.

Had he more oil

In his soft tongue than any whale, 'twould not
Have stilled the master-wave at least!

CORNWALL.

With us

Are all the Bishops—

BECKET. Traitors to God and me!
Who treble-bolt against themselves each blade
Of heaven's already-forked fires! Avaunt!

[To NORWICH, who approaches humbly.
Touch not my hem with thy Iscariot kisses!

CARDINAL. He is too much for us—'tis all in vain!

GRAND PRIOR (*falling on his knees to BECKET*). Wilt
thou spurn my grey hairs?—and from thy hem
Dash these half-childish tears?

BECKET. Richard de Hastings!
Heir of the oldest Norman name renowned!
Grand Prior of the Templars! thou kneel thus,
Sacred with age and station?

GRAND PRIOR. I am almost
Mere earth already: bowed towards the dust,
To which I moulder inly, by the weight
Of years and ills: 'tis little lowliness
To kneel, where I must lay me down so soon.

BECKET. Prythee, arise—it not beseems thee—

GRAND PRIOR. Never!
Till thou descend from what beseems not thee!—
I am as fixed in humbleness, as thou
In pride!—The shame of my prostration hang
On thee alone!—My tears, an old man's tears,
Damning as blood, be on thee, and cry up
To piteous heaven for vengeance!

BECKET. Hold!—this hath
The awe of very anathema in its sound,
Though launched by lips unqualified!—Rise, sir!
'Tis as the Patriarch Israel on his knees
Before another Joseph.—I am moved:
That's much.

GRAND PRIOR. Then say thou grant'st my prayer,
good son!

BECKET. I'll sign these Articles—with a mere clause
For mine own dignity—that they shall stand
As laws of the kingdom, *Salvo ordine nostro*.

GRAND PRIOR. That salvo is more worthy of a sophist
Than of a deep philosopher, my son!
Ill Latinists though we barons be, 'tis plain
Those learned words mean—*Saving your own Order*—
And to sign Articles with such reserve,
Is but to say,—these shall stand laws, when for us,

But when against us, by no means!—'Tis but
To sign in joint-bond for a general debt,
With this provision—such bond shall be binding
On all who have subscribed it—*Save ours, 'tis*.—
My son, be honest and more politic.

BECKET. Thou too, Grand Prior! join this league?—
thou too,

A military Monk, and altar-sworn
To be true soldier of the Church!—Wilt thou
Stab at her thus through me?

GRAND PRIOR. Alas! I am liker
To fall on my own sword for patriot sorrow.

If now such death were virtue:—I am old.
And feeble, very feeble!—All my strength
Is in my hoary locks!—but I would spend it,
Laying that white appeal before thy feet,
To save the Church and thee from their great foe—

BECKET. Why that's the king!

GRAND PRIOR. Thyself!—thou'rt her chief foe,
And thine own likewise!—Suicide prepense.
Parricide of thy Holy Mother the Church!—

CORNWALL (*to* NORWICH). Truth comes from Heaven,
most sure! How it inspires

That weak old man with vigour strange, and sense
So super-natural to his own!

NORWICH. He pauses:
He draws hard breath—he swoons—

GRAND PRIOR. Both—both shall perish—
Hark! how the King raves!—See those glistening swords!—

The Primate grasps the altar!—blood! blood! blood!
Save him!—His brains are on the floor!—O Becket!

Hadst thou but listened when the old man prayed,
This sacrilege had not been! [*Swoons away.*]

BECKET. Great God! I yield!—

Raise thee, good father! I have signed the scrolls—
Thy prayer is heard!

GRAND PRIOR. Now lay me i' the tomb—
[*He is borne off.*]

At Battle-Abbey, with mine ancestors—

I'm a Crusader, let my legs be crossed;

Mark you?—Go tell the king—that—that—I'm dead.

[*Scene closes.*]

Scene VII.

ELEANOR's Closet.

ELEANOR and the Physician.

ELEANOR. But wherefore not, old dotard ! have at once
Poisoned him ?

PHYSICIAN. "Poisoned !"—speak not so broad. your
highness :

You talk of poison as a common dose
Like coloured *aqua fura*, with us,—*ditto ditto*,
To be repeated every night at bed-time :
'Tis not just so.

ELEANOR. How long will he be dying ?

PHYSICIAN. Is not this chamber very old ?

ELEANOR. What mean'st ?

PHYSICIAN. Is there no craziness about it ?

ELEANOR. Some

I think within it !

PHYSICIAN. Ha ! ha ! ha !—But think you
Are not the walls cracked here or there ?

ELEANOR. As much as
The emptier chamber of thy brain.

PHYSICIAN. No more ?—

I did but dread those seamy auricles
Which oft to little ears without betray
Secrets most close, and with their mystic echoes
Magnify all that's breathed, as the lithe horn
Reverberates mightily the small bray of man.

ELEANOR. I do not understand your chymic speech :
Talk plain as me. Have you made sure the death
Of old De Clifford ?

PHYSICIAN. Hush ! hush !—Thus it stands :
I've given him—Who's behind that tapestry there ?
It moves !—it doth conceal some prowler !—

ELEANOR. True :
A felon watcher ; go you, pull him out
By the ears, still longer than your own.

PHYSICIAN. Ho ! ho !

[*Pulling aside the curtain.*
Feline you meant, not felon : here is nought
Save old Grimalkin !

ELEANOR. Watching for a mouse

Less timorous than thee!—Go on, sir!—Now,
What dost thou gape at?

PHYSICIAN. Here's a sliding pannel
Under the fringe!—I see it!

ELEANOR. Cunning fox!
That dost mistake a hencoop for a trap!—
'Tis an *armoire*, a cupboard, where I keep
Some cates and corbials for refection:
I see thou smell'st at it like other vermin.

PHYSICIAN. Truly a glass or so of *aqua vita*,
Most gracious Mistress, were restorative
After these fainting fits—

ELEANOR. Help thyself: go!

PHYSICIAN (*filling a glass*). This *aqua vita* is not that
same draught

You spake so freely of distributing?—
Not simple *aqua mortis*, no?

ELEANOR. Thou fool!
Thy low suspicions almost make me smile.
Dost think I'd poison thee with *aqua vita*,
When ratsbane's to be had?

PHYSICIAN. Faith, that is true!
'Tis cheap and potent death; but leaves the corse
Un sightlier than should be, livid, and drawn
Distort, as 'twere, within by tenter-hooks,
With its last agonies upon it featured
Too strong, and tale-telling. It is not safe,
Never make use of it!

ELEANOR. Not even on thee:
I will be guided by thy old experience
In safe and skilful murder.—Now, good doctor,
Go on.

PHYSICIAN. This poisonous talk hath almost choaked me.
But to our case. The old lord ere I came
Had long been under care o' the President
Himself of our grave College, an adept
At manslaughter—who hath saved me much trouble.

ELEANOR. Thou wert the first.

PHYSICIAN. Pardon me, gracious Madam:
Ere me had President *Disease* been with him,
Under whom doctors but licentiates are;
I found the patient well prepared; for he
Had Death's pale brand upon his wrinkled brow
Marking him for the tomb. I only minister'd

A gentle—quickener.

ELEANOR. Hastener, hurrier?

PHYSICIAN. Madam,

Nought as I live, but somewhat—to help Nature,

As we physicians say,—for he was dying;

Merely instead of a preservative,

A small exasperative,—nothing more!

ELEANOR. Then how soon is he dust?

PHYSICIAN. I could not say

At all!—but as I guess, he should be in

His rattles about now.

ELEANOR. That's well!—here's gold.

And the gay Rose, didst drop a canker in it,

To kill it quickly too?

PHYSICIAN. Madam, impossible!

Were I so reckless and precipitate

As you would have me, all would be found out,

And we both hang'd together! I'm too bold,

I should hang miles below your Majesty!—

Besides that, Mistress Rose sips like the birds

Only pure water, which all minglement

Would stain; and, like them too, eats, I believe,

But what she culls herself. 'Tis hard to syrup her;

Nathless, I'll find a way—

ELEANOR. Do, and thou'lt find it

Strown with gold blocks to build a palace of!—

Meantime go brew me something rich with venom,

For household use.

PHYSICIAN. Dear Madam, be discreet!

ELEANOR. Discretion is a virtue for the mean,

Not for the mighty!

PHYSICIAN. I'm of the mighty ones!

Thou ne'er hast done half the fine knaveries

With thy bold indiscretion, which my "meanness"

Hath wrought unknown in every civil land!—

But for my exquisite discretion, I

Had never scaped the tithe, nor been admitted

As a preserver, where I have proved, and may

Again prove, a destroyer!

ELEANOR. I have chafed

Thy noble pride in villainy, it seems,

So loud a claim thou lay'st to bear the bell.

PHYSICIAN. Ha! ha! ha! ha!—your Highness might contend!

ELEANOR. Begone, sir, as you came ; down those wry stairs,
Through the court vaults, and out by the sewer.—Begone !
PHYSICIAN. It is the safest way, though none of the
sweetest ! *[Exit secretly.]*

ACT IV.

Scene I.

Before the Temple Church, at Northampton.

DE BOHUN, CLARE, and LEICESTER.

CLARE. His grace was very meek !

DE BOHUN. He almost prayed
On mouth and nose. as I have seen a Saracen !
LEICESTER. And with what unction rare he scrubb'd
the feet

Of thirteen Beggars, like a polisher
Who files the brazen toes of tarnish'd Saints
Clean-yellow !

CLARE. But the best was, when he mix'd
Among the poorer sort ; 'twas as King Log
Leapt on by swarming frogs !—how patiently
He bore their foul splay hands on him, and saw
Them wide agape with wonder at the lowliness
Of such a heaven-sent thing !

LEICESTER. Four ancient hags
With beards like leopardesses, skins, and claws,
Grossly familiar, would almost have torn him
To quarters, each one striving to grasp all,
So fierce their ravenous affection !

DE BOHUN. See you
Whither this sycophancy to the base people,
And over-sanctity tends ?

CLARE. O plain ! He needs
Support against the King, Barons, and Bishops
Assembled now at Northampton to try him.

LEICESTER. Yea he will find 'twas not so light a fault
To break his oath at Clarendon late signed,
He would observe the Constitutions !—Shame
Upon the Pope too that absolved him from it,

As easily as for breaking a love vow!

DE BOHUN. By Tyrmagaunt! the King will make him rue it

In something bitterer than ashes!

CLARE. Harry

Hath so much of the royal lion in him,
That even when playing, faith, he gives a pat
With closed paw, worse than an earnest blow
From other hand: Now that he's sworn with rage
Heaven help the hunter who has goaded him!

LEICESTER. He'll do such witty wicked things too!—
What are here?

Some of the royal grooms.

Enter several Grooms.

I'll lay my spurs

They have committed some new piece of roguery
Worth hearing!—Well, good knaves, why d'ye laugh?

GROOM. My lord, at the brave guests we have just left
at the Archbishop's inn, and their gambols there!

LEICESTER. Guests? gamboling guests at the Primate's!

GROOM. We warrant they'll do justice to his stock of
provender: not a grain of barley have they had these two
days, that their stomachs might be a good gauge for it.

LEICESTER. Whom do you speak of—beggars, base-
born churls?

GROOM. No, no, sir!—all high-bred as Pegasus him-
self; and bear their necks so proud, his Grace would fear
even to caress them. If he attempted to curry their hides,
they would kick his Sanctity into the kennel.

LEICESTER. This fellow is so full of his trade, he can
only speak in its figures. You do not mean your horses,
villains! that you have left gamboling and gorging at the
Archbishop's inn?

GROOM. No, Sir Knight, not our horses, but the King's
—a score of them! all in his grace's saloon and parlours,
for lack of better stables! A dozen of ourselves remain to
wait on the guests, and see they have enough of forage and
litter.

LEICESTER. I told you what a pestilent wit the king
could be!

CLARE. This is horse-play indeed!

GROOM. Ha! ha! ha! yes, sir, playing at all-fours!—
plenty of horse-laughter too, ha! ha! ha!—there is such

whinnying and squealing and flinging up of hoofs, and all fierce racketing and royster, that 'tis as good as if the inn were haunted by the Nightmare and her brood of foals, the noise soun is so infernal! Ha! ha! ha!—his grace himself, I think, will go prancing mad!

CHARL. But was this done by his Highness's order, sirrah?

GROOM. Can't say, my lord; I only did Master Adam the equerry's.—Come on, Sim! come on!—Ha! ha! ha!

[*Exeunt Grooms laughing.*]

LEICESTER. There needs no order to the imps of mischief. From the great Father of it! nor to these Mock-devils, from the king: their piercing eyes Catch from his single fiery glance full light Of what shall please him, when himself scarce knows it. 'Tis marvellous the kind of intuition, And quick invention, even fools will have, If mischief's to be done!

CIARE. There's no one thing Perceance could gall the pride of our haught prelate More than this insult!

DE BOHUN. His ill-faith deserves it!

LEICESTER. We shall be late to Council. Mark: the sun.
[*Exeunt.*]

Scene II.

The Council-room.

HENRY, DE LUCY, CORNWALL, DE EYNSFORD, ARCH-BISHOP OF YORK; BISHOPS OF WINCHESTER, SALISBURY, LONDON, NORWICH; GLANVILLE.

HENRY. Glanville!—there is a thing I'd say to you Before we enter on this business.—

What was it? Pshaw! my head is in the mists, Or they in it!—O!—true!—We must not, Glanville, Let these poor squabbles 'tween that priest and us Prejudice nobler matters. You can guess What's in my mind.

GLANVILLE. I judge, Sire, as you speak Of noble matters, you must mean the cause

You've had so much at heart—the restitution,
 Betterment, stablishment, and general use
 Of that, long fallen into desuetude,
 That noblest of all noble things which man
 Ever invented for behoof of man,
 Trial of all accused, by their sworn peers
 Called jurors; and the name of the said practice,—
 Which shall go sounding down to latest times
 Join'd with your own, as its chief Advocate,
 Trial by Jury.

HENRY. Yea, good Ranulph, yea;
 But you great lawyers, in your deep research,
 And dabbling in a flood of words, oft sink
 Out of the common sight, like birds called divers,
 Than which you're more long-winded. Mend that fault!—
 You have been pondering o'er the theme, I see,
 And that was well. Draw up your thoughts upon it
 For my perusal, and in plain short terms;
 D'ye hear?

GLANVILLE. They shall brief, my gracious liege!

Enter DE BOHUN, CLARE, and LEICESTER.

HENRY. Ha! whence come ye?

LEICESTER. From the round church, my liege,
 Beside us here; where Becket was at mass.

HENRY. So! ye look grave: as if he being at prayers,
 Did more than merely recommend his soul
 To God and ours to Satan. Heard ye aught strange?

DE BOHUN. Nought strange in such a darer, though
 'twere monstrous

In any other man!

HENRY. What was that, ha?

CLARE. Besides his affectation, palpable
 Save to the mole-eyed people, of distress,
 Disaster'd state, rapt piety, resignation,
 Sanctified patience, sufferance supreme,
 By dress, air, act, long moan, loud sob, large tears,—
 He ordered as *Introit* to the service
 With blasphemous self-allusion—*Princes sat*
And spake against me.

HENRY. O! he would set up
 As mark'd for martyrdom!—with that angel face
 Of his,—the Syrian blackmoor's son!—Himself
 Persecutor of his king!

LEICESTER. He comes, my liege :
His Meekness comes !

Enter BECKET, arrayed in purple and pall, with his Crozier elevated, and a frowd retinue.

HENRY. Heyday ! the Pope of Canterbury !
Or Babylonian Lady all a-flame
For hot contest :—What think ye, cousins, are we
To have our heads broke with the pastoral Cross ?

BECKET. I bear it for my sole protection !

HENRY. Ay :
What dread'st thou ? else than paying thy just debts
To me and to the state ? Dost need protection
Against thy creditors, like a prodigal ?—
Glanville, that scroll !—

[Reading.]

Item ; three hundred pounds,—
Which thou didst levy upon Eye and Berkham,
Lately thy honours ; *Item ; five hundred marks,*
I lent thee at Toulouse ; *Item, five hundred,—*
For which I stood thy surety to a Jew,
Whom thou dealt'st much with, till thy credit broke,
What time thou wallowedst in the wanton streams
Of Luxury most dissolute ; Besides
An *item*, which to small rogues we set down
Plain theft, but to thy Grace embezzlement,—
Forty-four thousand marks, the balance due
From rents, proceeds, and profits of all prelacies,
Abbeys, and baronies, by thee administer'd
When Chancellor. *Item—*

BECKET. My liege ! my liege ! my liege !

HENRY. Oh ! I am then thy sovereign yet, it seems !
Most affable subject, still to call me liege !—
(To himself) I've snap't that nerve which keeps up most
men's pride,
The purse-string !

BECKET. I did never lack allegiance.—
But for my lavishness as Chancellor,
Call it more loose than his who lets the wealth
Of Tagus' bed roll down by golden shoals
Into the wasteful ocean,—'twas a thing
Praised, as magnificence in the minister
Which made for the more glory of the master,
Whose humour now condemns it !—Was he, Sire,

Who had been found a fraudulent Chancellor
Deem'd fit to be a Primate?

HENRY. 'Tis not what
He had been deem'd, but what we've proved him since.

BECKET. Crying injustice ! able to bring down
Those spheres in molten fragments on mankind,
But that 'twould crush the guiltless with the guilty !

HENRY. Thank heaven we have one milk-white soul
among us !—

Thou scarlet sinner !—Why—My gorge is swoln
With names, not huge enough for thy vast insolence !—
Tell me this—thou—who claim'st the Saintship next
Vacant i' the Calendar,—this, Immaculate !—
Thou didst subscribe in these law-guarded terms,
“Legally, with good faith, and without fraud,
Without reserve,”—to certain Constitutions,
Which thou abjur'st now : does such perjury
Merit no lapidation from the spheres
If they did hurl their hissing firestones at us ?

BECKET. There was no perjury !

HENRY. Hear this ! hear this !—
Sun-dwelling Truth, hast thou not one bright dart
To strike him through the brain with ?—Ye, grave Suffra-
gans ! [To the Bishops.

Did your supreme here (give me your corporate voice)
Swear to our Constitutions, yea or no ?

Bishops. Yea !

BECKET. Foolish children that would judge their father !—
I kept to what I swore, those Constitutions,
While they were such : but when a power beyond
Thine to enact, annull'd them, how could I
Observe non-entities ?

HENRY. Fraud within fraud !
In this same wise you may play fast and loose
With any oath ; may be, for aught I know,
My very true, sworn subject, on proviso,
Till you're absolved by bull into a traitor !

BECKET. His Holiness can ne'er absolve, except
To save or serve the Church—

HENRY. Yes, you may load
The winds with loyal oaths, to place your heart
Between mine and all stabbers, yet, even now,
Bear in one sleeve a permit to kill kings,
And in the other a poniard !

BECKET. My dear liege :—
This is uncharitable.

HENRY. To serve the Church !
To serve the Church, man !—Did the Romish altar
Burn for thy sovereign, as a sacrifice.
Thou'rt bound to slaughter him !—O Thomas ! Thomas !
Could I e'er think that thou wouldst pierce the heart
Of thy kind, loving, generous, royal master ?

BECKET. Not generous now, to say I'd pierce thy heart !
HENRY. Thou hast done so !—if not with knife or brand,
With keen-cold weapon of ingratitude,
More poignant still !—But 'tis no matter : go !
There is a gulf as wide as heaven from hell
Between us, across which 'tis vain to think
Of ever shaking hands !—I am thy enemy,
To thy perdition or my own !

BECKET. I know it,
So would betake me into banishment,
And save a sacrilege unto thy soul.

HENRY. Good man !—Thou wouldst betake thyself to
Louis,
To the French court, which breeds intriguants,
Fast as Lutetian filth breeds vermin vile,
Against my kingdom.—Twice thou hadst fled thither,
But that the roaring winds, our rough allies,
Forbade thy ship to fetch and carry treason !
My very seas rose up, upon my side,
Against thy steps !—Stay, and be baited here,
Till thy proud dewlaps drop with sweat and foam !—
As a first humblement, thy goods and chattels
Be all confiscate for contempt of court
And breach of fealty, in not attending
Our summons, when John Mareschal appeal'd thee
About the manour of Pageham—

BECKET. On that summons
I, being sick, sent four good household knights
To plead for me. Was this contempt ? Was this
Devoir left unperform'd ?—Yea, when the cause
Itself, was weigh'd at mine own spiritual Court
In scales which might have dropp'd from Libra stars,
As nice as Conscience trims with trembling hand—

HENRY. Ha ! ha !

BECKET. Sir ! Sir ! 'tis truth ; and he who here
By royal subornation brings that cause,

Would blush for it,—but before this grave Council,
Like it iniquitous!

*The Barons start up, and BECKET's train advance.
BECKET raises his Crosier and HENRY his Sceptre
between them.*

HENRY. These sacred wands,
Not unanointed swords, decide the fray!—
Archbishop, from thy last words, if no more,
I see thou art a self-devoted man
Unto destruction imminent!—Take your way.

WINCHESTER. My liege, accept two thousand marks
from him,
In lieu of all demands.

HENRY. I will not, Winchester!
But thou another froward priest, de Blois,
Whose mitre coped thy brother Stephen's crown,
Shalt pronounce sentence for the full amount.

[They retire some paces.]

NORWICH (to BECKET). My lord, beseech you on my
knees, submit,
Or you, the Church, and all of us are lost!

SALISBURY (to him). We cannot be thy sureties for
such sum,
Though for the less we might.

YORK (to him). Take exhortation
From one a Primate like thyself, and moved
By most disinterested love,—resign
Thy see, to gain full peace, release, and pardon.

LONDON (to him). 'Twas thou thyself who led'st us to
subscribe
The Constitutions, yet, when all too late,
Wouldst have us now proclaim ourselves, with thee,
Rebels to royal power, and renegades
To our own oaths!

BECKET. Folliott, thou shalt be ever
A stench i' the nostril of posterity!—
Thou art corrupted, man!—Primate of York,
This pall is much too weighty for thy shoulders!—
Sarum, I always knew thee as a gryphon
Keeping thy claw fast on thy hoarded gold!—
Poor Norwich, thou art pitiful!—Ye Suffragans,

[Turning to the other Bishops who implore him.]
Ay, who will suffer again, again, again,

(Spare me the pertinent quibble !) all the ills
That tyranny can heap on callous meanness,—
Repose your deprecative arms ! they 'll soon
Have beggar's-work enough, when ye are turn'd
By foes o' the Church, 'gainst whom ye raise no finger,
To mendicant monks and almsmen !—Stay me not,
I will go forward !

YORK. There's no stopping some men
Upon their course down the steep fall of RUIN !

BECKET. 'Tis plain, Sir King !—lord of these lower
skies !

Where you point all your thunder-bolts. But let them
Break first on this bare head, as yon poor image
Placed shelterless aloft that pinnacle
Bears with mild brow the elemental brunt
To shield his fane beneath !—Thou hast resolved
I know. thy throne shall rise above all height
Upon the ruins of the downcast Church,
Thy Babel-towering throne, from which shall come
Confusion o'er the land !—Have then thy will !
On this offensive mount, flourish a time,
Perish eternally !

HENRY. At thy behest ?

BECKET. There is a throne, compared to earthly ones,
Higher than heaven above the hills : dread thence
Thunderings, which shall shake thy throne to dust,
And bury thyself beneath it. and thy barons
Send down with blasted fronts, to be the spurn
Of devils less degraded towards their king !

HENRY. All this, because I summon a state debtor,
Punish a peculator, and attach
The goods of a disrespectful feudatory—
By Mahound, that's strange doctrine !

BECKET. Mere pretences
To crush the Church in me !—I do appeal
'Gainst all your sentences and penalties
Unto the Pope ; and henceforth do commit
To his safeguard, myself and my whole See !

BARONS. High-treason, an appeal to Rome !

BECKET. High-traitor,
I then !—too high for ye to touch !—though graspers
For whom the sacristy holds no sacred things !—
Nay, scowl on others, king !—it daunts not me !—
Thou—thou shouldst rather quail beneath my frown !—

Thy sword may kill the body, but this staff.
Sword of the Militant Church, which I do wield,
Can kill the soul !

HENRY. Pronounce his sentence straight '
He is deprived of all his lands and holdings !

BECKET. I will not drink pollution through mine ears !
Breathe it not, Winchester ! till I am gone,
Lest it scorch up thy lips to whitest ashes !

HENRY. Hear how the wolf can howl !

BECKET. Since impious men
Whom strength makes wrongful, wrongfulness makes strong,
Plunder-sworn, gross with produce of all crime,
Band them against the battlements of heaven
On earth, to wit the bulwarks of the Church—

HENRY. He means his turreted Elysium
At Saltwood-park,—to touch which we are Titans '

BECKET. And have decreed its sole defender here,
Me !—me !—most violently trampled down—
Their mounting-step to that assault sacrilegious,—

HENRY. Why thou wert far above our reach but now ?

BECKET. Since prayer, plaint, rhetoric's mingled honey
and gall,

Cannot withhold them from the fathomless pit
Gaping beneath their steps,—if they must follow
Satan's dark inspirations to such deeds,
Flagitious, dreadful, godless—which mute heaven
Permits, but weeps at—good men's mazement,
The angels' horror—

HENRY. Wipe from thy blest mouth
That surge of foam !

BECKET. Since then, Perverse ! thou seem'st
Desperate on self and state destruction both,
What more but this can parting Becket say,—
Thine and Hell's will be done !

HENRY. The wolf's dog-mad ! [Exit.
[Scene closes.

Scene III.

A Street in Northampton.

After some time, enter JOHN OF OXFORD.

JOHN OF O. How still and dead-struck seems the air,
which late
Was but one maddening whirl ! The pause itself

More fearful yet ! 'Tis like that breathlessness
 On some blank heath, when rival storms retire
 Quick from their lightning-blasted battle-field,
 And leave the waste more wild ! They but recoil
 To gasp, and 'gin their mighty rack again.
 Distract the fugitive tribes and darken Nature !—
 O these are ominous, gloomy times !—Proud Becket
 Bears into banishment a heart more feil
 Than tiger's towards his victim ere he spring :
 Henry (no lamb before him !) spurs to London.
 Like the Red Spirit northern Skalds describe
 Breathing pure flame, his very flesh a-glow,
 And fiercer blazing the more fast he flies !—
 However lamely, I must follow him ;
 There will be need of me at Sens to smoothe
 These differences with a polish'd tongue
 And urge with subtle one the royal pleas ;
 For Harry, stout and little superstitious
 As is his mood, loved fondly by his commons
 And dreadingly by his nobles, yet hath fears
 Political ; he will woo the Pontiff more
 To quit his holy pout at these late doings,
 Than he would Pope Joan for her dearest favours.
 So John of Oxford haste to make his peace
 As Sens's papal court, and also there
 Make your own English fortune, if you may. [Exit.

Scene IV.

An Inn and Smithy by the roadside.

DE MORVILLE, BRITO. and DE TRACI.

BRITO. Sir William, we must leave you : the time hastes.

DE MORVILLE. Almost as quickly as the king, whose
 steed

Seems to have feather'd hoofs, like one of old
 Our scholars prate of.

DE TRACI. Had mine but plain shoes

He'd make the wind a laggard !—Leave me not
 Good Gentlemen !—I'll with you straight.—Stir !

[To the Blacksmith.

Thou sledge-arm'd slug !

DE MORVILLE. Well the Archbishop stood
Toughly up to 't : I almost honour him.

BRITO. Didst thou remark his spirit how it rose,
As sinewy brawn doth on a boxer's arm,
Elastic, after every blow ?

DE MORVILLE. Well ! well !

DE TRACI. Had he but kept his temper to the last !

DE MORVILLE. Turbulence is the nature of a priest,
And while he rein'd it, 'twas as rocks upon
A burning mountain's mouth, which close it only
Till vent be found, and then they're spit at heaven.

BRITO. Nothing will e'er bring down his haughty front
But what brings down a bull's—the blow of a pole-axe !

DE MORVILLE. He'll get a tap from that same filliper,
Will make him stagger.

DE TRACI. Shall we have war ?

DE MORVILLE. Most like :
A civil one—no more !

DE TRACI. *Pardon !* what means
Un-civil war ? I never for my part,
In fight, slay any man but civilly ;
With compliments I deal him *coup-de-grâce*,
Nothing less courteous will he get from me !
I'm no ox-leveller like Sir Richard here.

Mortbleu ! what is a battle but a tilt
Without its mockery ? To Mars's lists
I, at the tongueless summons of the trump,
Come, as at love-call to my ladye's bower,
Gallant, and *debonair*, heartwarm, and trim,
In *gentil* hauberk, glistening helm, and arms,
But to disport me at the play of lives
With ill intent to no man ! 'Tis most churlish
To fight for hate, and pash a stranger's head
Because he's stout ; live he on if he may,
After I let the light through him ! who cares ?
My devoir has been done !—*Saint Gris*, my horse !

[*Going to the Smithy.*]

BRITO. Shoe him with quicksilver, good Smith !

DE MORVILLE. ———— [Brave damosel !
I've seen him kiss his hand to a gallant plume
Before he strook it, dyed with sanguine, off,—
Then cut a capricole !

BRITO. Mine ancestors,
'Tis said, were taught to dance among the points

Of sharpest swords and spears, for pastime : he
 Seem'd to do so by nature !—How he skips
 About the Smith, like gnat about a horse
 Before it fixes !

DE MORVILLE. Come !—What ! ostler there !—
 We will not stay. Boy ! bring our horses out.—

Enter Boy.

BOY. Horses, sir ? there's not a four-legged beast in the
 stable but the ass and John Ostler.

DE MORVILLE. What is 't thou say'st ? Innkeeper !
 scoundrel ! thief ! horse-stealer !

Enter Innkeeper.

INNKEEPER. Sir Knight, I pray you—

DE MORVILLE. None of your prayers, Infidel ! Fetch
 me my horse in a trice, or I'll cut off thy head, and nail it
 up over thine own door for a Saracen's !

INNKEEPER. Why, Sir, your horses have been just led
 out the back way.

BRITO. By whom, knave ?

INNKEEPER. By two servants at command of my lord
 the Archbishop, who said he would explain all to your
 worship.

DE MORVILLE. Here's pretty doings !

BRITO. By St. Edward, this passes !

DE MORVILLE. Which way are they gone ?

INNKEEPER. Round about, sir ; but his Grace is here.

[Exit.]

Enter BECKET, GRYPE, and BO-HAM.

BECKET. You took, my menials tell me, certain horses
 Out of mine inn to-day : was it not so ? *[To GRYPE.]*

GRYPE. Two sorrels and a black.

DE MORVILLE. They were our own.

BECKET. They were of twenty sent me yesternight,
 As present from the King : I cannot lose them !

BRITO. Sir Primate, they are ours, and we will have
 them !

BECKET. When you shall prove them yours, as it may be,
 By words of better credence than your own :
 Till then I know not who has right to come
 Raffle my mansion, and call what he steals
 No thievery.

DE MORVILLE. "Thievery!"—the king's gentlemen Thieves?

BECKET. No! by no means! if indeed ye be The gentlemen ye call yourselves; but I Cannot yet guess ye such, whilst ye seem felons.

DE MORVILLE. What! have we stolen out of your remembrance,
My lord Archbishop?—You did know us once.

BECKET. I have, methinks, seen visages like yours In the King's shadow, darkly, times ago;
But I am oft oblivious of such things,
My memory being throng'd with better.—Pray you,
Go from me now.

MORVILLE. De Morville is a baron,
Proud prelate!—Lord of Knaresborough Castle, I!

BECKET. A lesser baron—it may be, perchance—

BRITO. The Britos were born sovereigns, when the Becketts Were but their slaves and villeins.

BECKET. Bosham, my book:
I'll read a prayer or two, whilst the mules bait.

[*He begins to read while the Knights threaten him.*]

BOSHAM. Will't please your grace retire into the house,
Or shall I call your knights?

BECKET. Who needs defence?
England's most sacred head?—go to! go to!

DE TRACI (*returning*). *Allons, mes enfans!* See you how my steed

Pants hotter than the bellows, now he's shod:

Allons. [GRYME *whispers* BECKET, *pointing to the forge.*]

BECKET. Ha!—that's another of the twenty!

Bosham, go tell a groom to seize that horse
For the Archbishop's use. [Exit BOSHAM.]

DE TRACI. *Diable!* my horse?

BECKET. Gryme, set these cavaliers aright upon
This trivial matter. [Walks apart reading.]

GRYME. Sirs, if you'll examine
These chargers; underneath their housings rich,
You'll find them branded with the letter B
And a large crook crossed: this is for archbishop,
That is for Becket: you've but to examine,
And be full satisfied.

DE TRACI. What tell you me
Of B's and crooks and Becketts?—He shall have
My steed by neither crook nor hook—

BECKET.

You are loud :

It is irreverent in this presence. Are ye
Of the King's body-guard. I can but say
The master's conduct shows it in the men
Most coarsely mimick'd.—Ye shall have no steeds.
So follow him to London as ye can.

DE TRACI. Yield we thus, friend? [To DE MORVILLE.

DE MORVILLE. What say you, Brito?

BRITO.

I?—

Even what you say!

DE MORVILLE. Though I'm no church-goer,
There is an awe hangs round this priest: I cannot
Draw anything sharper on him than my tongue.

(To BECKET.) Granted these beasts were of your household,
Sir,

They've been attach'd to-day with all your goods.

BECKET. Does that give you a right to cym them, friend?
It more behoves me guard what I must soon
Surrender to the Sheriff, or be deem'd
A petty-traitor. Meantime they will serve
To bear me on the road to Canterbury;
My servants want good steeds.

DE MORVILLE. O that thou hadst not
This sacred stole upon thee—

BECKET. That I have it

Is well for ye!—or my good sword had sent
Your souls a-horseback on the current winds
To serve the king of darkness!—Speak once more,
I will dismiss them to eternal pain
Even with this naked arm. Begone!—or stay

Accurs'd for ever! [They withdraw intimidated.

Now they have given ground,

I will retire. Go you before me, Richard!

[Exit with GRAYNE.

*The Knights come forward.*DE MORVILLE. 'T was all in vain; I could not meet
his eye!DE TRACI. *Pardie*, his lance-point were the easier
parried!

BRITO. You'd have found even that no knitting-needle
In an old nurse's hand.—Mars was his sponsor;
He had his first meat put into his mouth
Upon a sword's point; that was his spoon-feeding!

DE TRACI. He has affray'd us, three puissant knights,
By his mere growl, as a grim mastiff would
A leash of greyhounds.

DE MORVILLE. Let us bide our time!—
Come, we must e'en creep forward if we may
On any churl's old dobbins we can seize.

BRITO. Be the priest hang'd as high as his own pride!

DE MORVILLE. And without benefit of clergy!—Come.

DE TRACI. I'll make that whisperer, Gryme, cry out at
least

One day or other!—*Allons, mes amis!*

[*Exeunt.*]

Scene V.

An Alley in the Labyrinth.

Enter JOHN OF SALISBURY, with a book.

JOHN OF S. "*Formosam resonare docet Amaryllida
sylvas.*"—

Let me pause here, both tongue and foot. Such melody
Of words doth strike the wild-birds mute to hear it!
Honey-lipp'd Virgil, 'tis an ignorant truth
To name thee—Sorcerer; for thou dost indeed
Enchant by happiest art!—Here is a place
To meditate thy sylvan music in,
Which seems the very echo of these woods,
As if some Dryad taught thee to resound it.
O gentle breeze, what lyrist of the air
Tunes her soft chord with visionary hand
To make thy voice so dulcet? O ye boughs
Whispering with numerous lips your kisses close,
How sweet ye mingle secret words and sighs!
Doth not this nook grow warmer with the hum
Of fervent bees, blithe murmurers at their toil,
Minstrels most bland? Here the dim cushat, perch'd
Within his pendulous arbour, plaintive woos
With restless love-call his ne'er-distant mate;
While changeful choirs do flit from tree to tree,
All various in their notes, yet chiming all
Involuntary, like the songs of cherubim.
O how by accident, apt as art, drops in
Each tone to make the whole harmonical,
And when need were, thousands of wandering sounds

Though aimless would, with exquisite error sure,
 Fill up the diapason!—Pleasant din!
 So fine that even the cricket can be heard
 Soft-fluttering through the grass. Long have I mark'd
 The silver toll of a clear-dropping well
 Peal in its light parishioners, ouphes and elves:
 'Tis nigh me, certes?—I will peer between
 These honeysuckles for it.—Lo! in verity
 A Sylph, with veil-fall'n hair down to her feet,
 Bending her o'er the waters, and I think
 Giving them purer crystal from her eyes—
 O learned John, but thou art grown fantastic
 As a Romancer! thou art quite bedream'd,
 A sleep-walker even in the breadth of day,
 That err'st with wide eyes!—Hark!— [A lute is heard.
 O me! O me!

It is the Lady Rosamond herself,
 Nymphlike beside her Well!—She sent long since
 For me, her youth's dear tutor, to have given her
 Lessons of Delphic lore she ever loved,
 And now, methinks, the better that she's sad.
 I should be out of all good grace with her! [Exit.

Scene changes to Rosamond's Well.

ROSAMOND (*singing to her lute*).

Listen, lords and ladies all,
 O listen to my lay!
 And I will sing the fate and fall
 Of a gentle Ladye gay!

Enter JOHN OF SALISBURY.

JOHN OF S. Pardon thy ancient master, fairest Pupil!
 They left me wandering in this wilderness,
 Where I did lose myself; yea, deeper still
 I' the labyrinth of meditation wild
 And maze of fancy, wherein whoso gets,
 Heaven help him! he is self-inextricable.

ROSAMOND. Pardon? O give me yours—I am most lost!

JOHN OF S. Sad in Elysium, lady?

ROSAMOND. Ay, forsooth!

JOHN OF S. That's discontentful.

ROSAMOND. Thou didst tell me once,—

It was thy earliest and thy latest lesson,

(O that I ne'er had conn'd it, or had kept it')—

“Be satisfied of thyself, that's the first thing,
Contentment will come after with all else.”

JOHN OF S. And yet thy merit, less of form and face,
Though these be Wonder's gaze—

ROSAMOND. Yes, I am fair,
Outside!

JOHN OF S. Less than thy bosom'd ones, have raised thee
To the throne's highest step.

ROSAMOND. Unto the lowest
Before Humiliation's shrine, have brought me!
There lies she bleeding tears deplorable,
Whom the world calls most happy! Should she be so?

JOHN OF S. I can but say what I have ever found thee:
Filial to very piety; a mistress
Serving thy servants more than they could thee:
Unto the poor a virtual Charity,
A comfortable Pity to the sad;
Docile with me and dateous as a daughter,
Than which I more have loved thee, and must still;
A pleader for the people to their king,
Who dost allure with beauteous wile the sword
Of Vengeance from his hand, and there insinuate
The sword of Mercy for it! O whatever
Thy faults, Fair Rosamond, to latest time
Thou shalt be loved in England!

ROSAMOND. Quite deserveless!—
Yet 'twas my father's counsel and command,
If not those of my conscience. Come, good master!
Since thou hast cheer'd me with thy praise, and hope
At least of man's forgiveness,—read me, I pray you,
Some lines that teach submission and content
From thy beloved book.

JOHN OF S. If it please you,
Most gentle mistress, you shall read, while I
Look o'er the page.

ROSAMOND. Well, I will English it
Precisely as I can, and you'll correct me.
What is it?

JOHN OF S. Virgil's pastoral address
To the old Shepherd.

ROSAMOND. “*Fortunate senex.*”
How!—let me see—it would go somewhat thus:
“Happy Old Man!—here mid thy well-known streams

And sacred founts, shalt thou the umbrageous cool
 Inhale! This neighbour hedge of willow flowers
 Still pasturing Hyblæan bees, shall oft
 With their light murmur lure thee to repose!
 Here shall the woodman sing unto the winds
 Beneath the lofty rock; nor shall thy care
 The deep-voiced doves, nor shall the turtle cease
 From the aerial elm-tree to complain."—
 How poor my English sounds!

JOHN OF S. Nay, it comes well
 So musically tongued: and faithful too.

ROSAMOND. No! no! its excellence is unreachable
 Even by skill less schoolgirl-like than mine.
 That of the doves, "*Rauca, tua cura, palumbes*—"
 How hoarsely-sweet! just as they murmur now!

JOHN OF S. Doth it not breathe a sweetness o'er thy
 mind,

Restful content and placid joy, this picture
 Of the old happy swain?

ROSAMOND. Happy he was,
 For he was innocent! But peace without
 Doth not give peace within; it must be felt
 Here first, or the other is not seen. O would
 My breast and I were friends! O that I were
 At peace even in the grave—

[*A clarion sounds.*

Henry! [Exit.

JOHN OF S. The king!—

There flies she to her bower, wing'd by love,
 Straight, low, and swift, like blackbird to its nest!
 How soon love's soft alarum silenced, too,
 Conscience, the wren, which but in stillness cheeps!
 Well, if a lover, handsome, young, and brave,
 Courteous and generous, a prince of princes,
 Wise, witty, learned, skilful in all arts
 To do, or undo, what and whom he wills,
 Sparing nor pains, nor promises, nor pacts,
 Nor power itself, to triumph—were excuse
 For helpless woman erring, 'tis my pupil's.
 Many a one with not the tithe so much
 To warp her way, goes tenfold wider wrong;
 Yea, scouts the dallyer by Virtue's path,
 Whilst she herself is on the slide to sin.
 I have remark'd it, and will set it down
 In my court-commonplaces, for my book.

Now let me find mine own right way, if possible.
What, Gabel, are you there?—Come hither, friend.

Enter GABEL.

GABEL. O sir, I was looking for a stray sheep,—a black one, sir—or rather iron-brown, the colour of your cloak, sir: have you seen it?

JOHN OF S. Not I.

GABEL. It did not come here to the well, sir, with you?

JOHN OF S. I never looked.

GABEL. Ah! he did not look at the water, or he'd have seen the sheep there I was in search of!—Come sir, I'll guide you to the pen.

JOHN OF S. "*Rura mihi et rigui placeant in vallibus amnes.*"

GABEL. How prettily he bleats! Come, sir, you must not stand, like a new-yeaned lamb, whose legs are too long for walking.

JOHN OF S. Come on, good Gabel!—though I had rather stay—"*Flumina amem, sylvasque inglorius!*"

GABEL. He's a born idiot! I shall have as much ado to drive him forward, grunting Latin with his nose to the ground, as a hog in canonicals! [*Exeunt.*]

Scene changes to an Alcove.

HENRY and the EARL OF CORNWALL.

HENRY. So, he is fled, uncle?

CORNWALL. Coastward, as they tell me.

HENRY. To France. Some storm embargo him once more! I could forgive those seabord thieves, called wreckers, Who pounce like cormorants on half-drown'd men, If they would now make prey of my Archbishop: The law I threat against them shall not pass Till we have heard his fate. Well, we'll sequester, At least, his revenues of Canterbury, And let this high-flyer on ether live, Like bird of Paradise, as he is!

CORNWALL. He hath Many relations, friends, domestics, here Who eat no other's bread; they'll not have husks, Now he has left them almsless.

HENRY. Banish all to him! So, hanging on his emptiness, they'll help

To bring his haughty stomach down. Ay, banish them!
'Tis a good thought: I thank thee for it, uncle.

CORNWALL. Nay, the whole credit of it is your majesty's!

Enter an Attendant.

ATTENDANT. My liege, the Lady Rosamond awaits
Your presence or your pleasure in the bower.

HENRY. Say we attend on hers. *[Exit Attendant.*

Clouds, from my front!

Now be my face the mirror of the sun,
No heart like mine glows in his ardent breast!
Away all storms for one sweet summer eve,
Away all cares but those of love alone!

[Returning.] Uncle! You'll mention not this banishment
Of Becket's household, to the Lady Rose,
Else will she bend the strength of all her tears
To shake my purpose. You conceive? *[Exit.*

CORNWALL. Most well!—

Stern with the stubborn, tender with the mild,
Fiercest in battle-field, gentlest in bower,
Heart rough of rind, but melting soft at core,
That's the right chivalrous spirit! Now he'll woo
As if he, aye, sigh'd at a lady's feet,
And never stretch'd a dragon at his own!
Come! I have stay'd the length of twenty kisses,
Each a breath long; 'tis proper to walk in. *[Exit.*

Scene changes to Rosamond's Bower.

HENRY and ROSAMOND.

ROSAMOND. You must have ta'en a bird's flight from
so far.

HENRY. No coming rainbow spans the sky so swift,
As I cross'd hither.

ROSAMOND. Nor so swift again
Vanishes!—Ah, thou truant!

HENRY. Faithfuller
Than ray-crown'd Lucifer is to the dawn,
Or Hesperus to eve!

Enter CORNWALL.

ROSAMOND. You are indeed
My star! the ruler of my horoscope!
On whose bright circlet, loftiest in the spheres,
Depend my weal and woe!

HENRY. Doubt it not, sweet !
Uncle of Cornwall, will you scold your niece
(That is to be), for her sad-heartedness ?
I cannot.

CORNWALL. Fairest niece, you are to blame—

HENRY. Come, that's enough ! She smiles, which is a sign
You've touch'd her deeply, and she will amend.
How likes my Lady the new cast of hawks
I sent her—do they fly ?

ROSAMOND. They soar !—yet come
Down again to my wrist as straight as larks,
Whene'er I call them.

HENRY. That's because the lure
Is dazzling white, and sparkles in their eye ;
This lily wrist, I mean.

ROSAMOND. Ah, flatterer !—
And the two greyhounds are a brace of spirits
In canine form ; they course the fields as light
As gossamer, yet strong their slender limbs
As bows of springiest yew. 'Tis beautiful
To see them toss themselves like bounding hoops
About you, with such gentle tamelessness
Which knows not how to still itself, and mocks
The hand that would caress them into quiet !
They are a pair of Graces in their kind !

HENRY. Well, we will go a-falconing to-morrow,
And run them quiet. How is your white palfrey,
Fleet Solyman, whom we got o'er from Spain ?

ROSAMOND. Then you will stay with me—all—all to-morrow ?
'Tis but one, single day. O recreant knight,
That will refuse a lady !

HENRY. I must to Caen,
For England's good : and thy true patriot heart
Hath even more pride in me as her Champion
Than as thy own ! Yet I shall, peradventure,
Cheat her of some few hours.

ROSAMOND. Not one for Rosamond !
Serve England, that's thyself ; thyself, that's me.—
Well, I've another favour you must grant.

HENRY. Uncle, what covetous creatures women are !
If not this, why then that ! but something ever.

CORNWALL. Nay, it is true ! 'tis true !—the King says
true.

ROSAMOND. In faith I will not be a loving niece
If you take part against me thus, my lord.
'Tis for poor master John of Salisbury,
My good, kind Tutor!

HENRY. He's a friend of one,
Rank foe of mine : let him still follow Becket,
Who'll make provision for him.

CORNWALL (*aside*). Such as will not
Lie heavy on his stomach!

ROSAMOND. Now you are cold,
And cold to me!

HENRY. Well, sweet! we will transiate him.

CORNWALL (*aside*). To some French benefice, with a
rich glebe-field
Of water-cresses, where he may take in kind
His tithe-frog if he will!

ROSAMOND. Well? Have you thought?
Bishop of what?

HENRY. Take your arms from about me;
It is a kind of main force—a sheer laying
Of violent hands upon me—is it not uncle?

CORNWALL. Assault and desperate seizure, I am witness!

ROSAMOND. Then I will hang here, where it was
committed!

HENRY. O thou—thou twining, clasping, tendril thing,
That to my proud top creep'st thy flexible way,
And makest it bend to thee! Have what thou wilt:
John shall be our next Bishop.

ROSAMOND. I will call him:
He should be in the cabinet.—Master John!

[*Going to the door.*]

His Highness. Come!

Enter JOHN OF SALISBURY.

HENRY. So, master John!—We'd make you
A bishop, master John! at your and our
Sweet Lady's suit.

JOHN OF S. Beholden ever
To dear and fair my Scholar! *Pace tua!*
(Somewhat be-mazed yet!), I would have said,
My gracious Mistress.

HENRY. Hark'ee : you're my Bishop,
Not Becket's, who and his chief partisans
Are banished.

JOHN OF S. Then I'm still plain master John :
Yea, and an exile too !

CORNWALL. Art a fool also ?
Wilt give up for an outcast, a vile lack-penny,
A high-road starver,—hope, and home, and king ?

JOHN OF S. Never my king, but not more soon my friend.

HENRY (*aside*). He's steadfast—that's a man to gain.
I'll think of him.

ROSAMOND. Dear Master !—dearest Liege !

JOHN OF S. Sire, thy true subject. [*Exit.*]

HENRY (*to ROSAMOND*). You see 'twas not my fault :
but be at ease. [*They converse apart.*]

CORNWALL. Were ever dunces like your deep-read men !
Lunatics like you poets ! There he walks
Leisurely as an ass, though March-hare mad,
Away from Fortune, having spurn'd her wheel !
Scholars, forsooth, and heaven-born Bards !—Sheer idiots '
That shade themselves from every shower of gold
Thinking it meant to crush them ; or if not,
Scorn even to pick it up ! 'Tis as good calling
Sea-gulls to dovecotes, as them to warm cribs ;
Both feed upon the estrays of the elements,
Famine's allowance ; when they might grow fat
Merely by opening mouth at rich men's tables.
Let them go hang like bats in caves together,
I'll pet such purblind flitter-mice no more !

HENRY (*to ROSAMOND*). John shall be cared for, though
he flies from me.

Believe it, dearest ! Becket's venom lies
At root of all this rebel faith I reap ;
'Tis he corrupts my vassals—he !—he !—he !

ROSAMOND. Nay but, my sovereign love, think how
most apt

All are to deem the wronger knows he wrongs,
And thence our bitterest quarrels : Becket may
Do wrong more ignorantly than malignantly.

HENRY. Malignantly, say I ! and that admitted,
As ignorantly as you please. Ah ! thou'rt too clement :
A beauty in your sex, in ours a blemish.

ROSAMOND. I am not all so peccantless myself !

HENRY. O thou'rt a sad one ! I do think thou wouldst—
No, I'll not say it !

ROSAMOND. Tell me it ! I will know it !
Tell me the whole, whole ill thou think'st of me !

HENRY. Come hither to my arms, and then I'll tell thee.—
I think thou wouldst defend the Devil himself
If I accused him harshly!

ROSAMOND. No, in sooth!
But—save to me—bytimes I mark o'ermuch
Of thy great stock, the stern first William, in thee;
And fear, when chafed, that thou mayst work thyself
As well as others woe. None are, perchance,
For all the blotch'd or beauteous mask they wear,
So virtueless as they seem, no more than viceless.

HENRY. Well, you shall give the discipline yourself
To penitent Becket when he bares his shoulders;
You shall your scourge of feathers, and your besom
Of flowers, lay on him sharply! Come, forget him.
Let us forth to the river. I had vow'd
These hours to pleasure only, love, and thee!

ROSAMOND. The barge hath all her rainbow streamers out,
You can behold them wavering in the breeze,
There, through the trellis.

HENRY. And we'll take with us
Provençal Arnaut with a minstrel band
To kindle glee amongst the squires and damsels:
Come, we will feast the winds with melody!
Through the enchanted air, along the flood
We'll pour a stream of music as we row,
That shall lead captive every god o' the wave,
And thou shalt be chief Syren!—Uncle, come! [*Exeunt.*]

Scene changes to a Lawn in the Labyrinth.

Enter JOHN OF SALISBURY.

JOHN OF S. Farewell, sweet Woodstock bowers! bliss-
ful shades,
Through whose dim walks, so pleasantly perplex,
Oft have I wander'd, shadow-like myself!
Where with the finer spirits of the place
Communing, I have felt the bonds of earth
Fall gradual from about me, and it seem'd
Leave me at length mere soul, that purest state
Which man's last hope aspires! Farewell, ye lawns,
Ye silent meadows green, whose golden flowers
Breathe up rich vapour as floats o'er the fields
Of sun-fed asphodel. Ye willowy streams,
By whose wild banks my thoughts and I have stray'd;

Ye verdurous alleys, down whose tuftless sward
 My foot has met no mossy obstacle
 To wake me from my dream, while brow to book,
 I walk'd oblivious of all else, yea letting
 The insensible hours steal from me,—fare ye well !
 I must no longer see thee, Woodstock ! haply
 Never again ! nor even my native shores !
 “ *Nos patriæ fines et dulcia loquimur arva.* ”
 Alas, what difference sees the selfsame day,
 Or moment, in the fates of different men !
 Lo ! for proof present, where from happy bower,
 Throng down that jocund crowd unto the barge
 Buoyant herself, light dancing on the wave,
 Spreading her broad skirts to each errant wind
 And flaunting her gay ribbons as a lure
 For every amorous Zephyr. There they crowd,
 Minstrels and all, each voice and instrument,
 Their very laughter, shouts of firm command,
 And cries of haste, and feign'd shrieks of fear
 At the unstable element,—all tuned
 To one high note of joy : like manor swans,
 Bright wantons of the water, every islet
 Is still their home ; they sail from home to home,
 And turn at eve, tired with their plashy play,
 Unto that home's dear homestead, their green nest.
 But dolorous John must far away to France,
 With none save Poverty for his guide, and Scorn
 For his close follower ! Well ! 'tis Heaven's will,
 And I submit mine. Farewell, Lady Rose,
 My pupil and my anxious patroness !
 Would that I were even sure of seeing thee
 Once more, wherever !—*Vale, vale, inquit Johannes !* [*Exit*

ACT V.

Scene I.

The Queen's Cabinet at Windsor.

Enter ELEANOR with a letter.

ELEANOR. What says our correspondent, the Archbishop?
 This patch'd-up truce between the King and him
 Which has allow'd his late return to England,
 And re-instatement in full power and pride,

Leaves them as bitter enemies as before.
 Either would juggle, or jugulate the other,
 Could he do so with safeness. But let's see.

(*Reading*). "Sovereign Madam,

In answer to your Highness's letter touching a certain Dædalean work of my careless days, to wit the Labyrinth called of Woodstock, accept this: I can be an open antagonist to a king, but a secret one to no man; neither can petty intrigues of the royal bower concern the Primate of all England. Nevertheless.

"Your Highness's well-wisher,

"THOMAS CANTERBURY."

—Thomas Canterbury, what a Saint you are! Pride makes him traitor on a large scale, yet keeps him true to his little allegiance! But for his pride alone, he would love to pinch the King's heart by this corner just as much as I do. —Now, what's to be done? If the dwarf comes back like others from their voyage of discovery, with the skin of an unknown weasel, and an extraordinary cockle-shell found on the coast, my own brain must work. Rather than lose the occasion, now Henry's abroad, I'll sack Woodstock itself, even if my Regent son will not wink at it: and I am sowing a little rebellion-seed in his mind against his to me disloyal father. Yes, Eleanor will risk imprisonment for the rest of her life, but thus "Dædalean work" of our Archbishop shall lay open itself and its monster. What! baffle the Queen's Majesty! [*Exit.*]

Scene II.

A Coppice in the Labyrinth.

PRINCE RICHARD and a Henchman, who trims him a club.

RICHARD. Leave the knobs on't: I'll not have one o' them

Smoothed off thus!

HENCHMAN. But your graciousness—

RICHARD. Give't to me!

And the bill-hook too. Now, go you find the dog.

HENCHMAN. Your grace will promise me not to stray farther

From Woodstock bounds? I shall be whipt and hang'd

If we are caught here in the Labyrinth,
Albeit but o'er the hedge.

RICHARD. No, I'll not stir ;
There is my knightly word.

HENCHMAN (*going*). He will not break it,
Unruly little lurdane as he is ! [*Exit.*

Enter ROSAMOND.

ROSAMOND. Who may this stalworth boy, with curls of
gold
Clustering adown his shoulders, be?—Thy name?

RICHARD. Plantagenet !

ROSAMOND. What dost here, royal child?

RICHARD. You are a sweet-voiced country lass, and so
I'll answer you. See you not what I do?
Shape me a mall to brain the Saracens.

ROSAMOND. But wherefore venture hither, when thou
know'st
'Tis strict forbid?

RICHARD. Why that's the cause I do't !
What bravery else in't? When my mother Nell
Says, "Richard, 'ware that blood-hound !" Straight I
grip him

Fast by the sullen muzzle till he grins,
Then give him a box i' the chaps to make him growl
Like thunder : ha ! ha ! ha !

Then she so shakes me, and I roar with laughter I
(*Turning, and seeing ROSAMOND*). O !—O !—O !—
You are Fair Rosamond, I'll bet a kingdom !

ROSAMOND. How know you that, brave sir?

RICHARD. Because—because
You have the sweetest lips—O now I see
What made you speak so sweetly to me here !
You cannot help it !

ROSAMOND. You are gallant, young sir !

RICHARD. And should not every Chevalier be that?
Tell me—are you a Maid of Honour?

ROSAMOND. Alas !—
(*Aside.* How every quibble starts me !)—No, my lord.

RICHARD. I'm sure you should be !—One so handsome
ought
To be most honourable !

ROSAMOND. O how I blush
Before this little lecturer !—When youth

Can lesson years, 'tis sin's timidity
Cowed by strong innocence.

RICHARD. Perhaps you are not
Old enough for my mother's taste in Maidens?

ROSAMOND. I'm old enough, sweet boy, to have a son
Almost thy twin.

RICHARD. Nay, you're too slim to have
Such a great boy as me!—Hey, here's a bevy!

Enter Damsels running.

First Damsel. O madam! madam! madam! save your-
self!

There's such a monster coming after us!

ROSAMOND. What is it?

First Damsel. We cannot tell! The many faces
It grinned at us, made us hide ours, and flee!

Second Damsel. 'Tis like a she-baboon, but uglier!

Third Damsel. Fangs
Like horns, and fiery eyes, and claws to boot
Like a dwarf ogre!

RICHARD. 'Tis a Saracen!
Everything grim and odious is a Saracen!

Damsels. It comes! it comes! jolting along the sward
Its hunch'd deformity on unequal legs,
Mowing and muttering!—Fly! fly!— [*The Damsels fly.*

RICHARD (*setting himself before ROSAMOND*). Fear you
not,
I'll be your Champion!

ROSAMOND. Boy, mad boy, come with us!

RICHARD. Hold me not, Lady!—See how I'll make
this Saracen
One mummy with my mall!

*Enter DWERGA, horribly disguised, opposite to her the
Henchman.*

HENCHMAN (*seeing DWERGA*). The fiend! the fiend!
[*Runs away.*

RICHARD (*rushing upon the Dwarf*). Gog!—Magog!—
Mahound!—Tyrmagaunt!—

[*DWERGA, with doleful screams and yells, is driven
off by RICHARD.*

ROSAMOND. O true son
Of my own knightliest hero!—Hark his shouts!
Anger, triumphant glee, and glorious laughter,

To mix in combat with a very demon !
 Save him, O good St. George ! thou patron saint
 Of England's chivalry, save this gallant child !
 Wretched suspense !—end ! end !—O my young Champion !

Re-enter RICHARD.

Art safe ? not wounded ? hast thou lost no blood ?—

RICHARD. No—but I've lost my breath !—What leathern
 fells

Those Infidels have ! There is no piercing them !

Re-enter Damsels and Henchman.

(*To the Henchman.*) Was I not right to have the knobs
 left on ?

Runagate !

HENCHMAN. Sweetest prince, let us away !

RICHARD. Go hang !—Come, lady, now my guerdon of
 you !

ROSAMOND. To my young saviour-knight, what can I give ?

RICHARD. Why, don't you know ? do ye not know the
 rules ?

You are to take me home, and feast me there
 With spiced wines, confections, and sweetmeats rich,
 In a grand lustrous Hall, where you and I
 Sit under a fine canopy ; and, at last—
 No, both at first and last, you are to give me,
 With modesty all maiden and demure,
 A sweet, sweet kiss—

ROSAMOND. My warmest one—(*kisses him.*) Where
 read you

Of all these gallantries ?

RICHARD. Read ?—plague on reading !
 One may learn gallantry without book, I hope !

HENCHMAN. His brain is stuff'd with tales of old Sir
 Guy,

Rolands, Round Tables, Tournies, and Twelve Peers,
 Dragons, and Saracens, which his ear picks up
 From Minstrels loose, that haunt the royal halls,
 And our romancing sempstresses.

RICHARD. Thou liest, [*Striking him.*]
 Base-hearted peasant !—Call them so again,
 I'll bang thee like the other unbeliever
 In the slough there, and leave both of ye
 To choke i' the mire together ! Madam, come !

ROSAMOND. O he's the very promise of his father !
 Whene'er he speaks to woman, his broad brow,
 Which noble ire contracts and knots betimes,
 Spreads to a radiant smoothness,—Shall I call you
 Herculean Cupid, for thy beauteous strength
 Or, for thy generous courage, CŒUR-DE-LION ?

RICHARD. I know not Cupid. I'll be CŒUR-DE-LION !

ROSAMOND. Thou shalt then!—Come!—His father's
 cheek will glow
 With pride, to hear of Rosamond's protector.—
 Come on, Prince Richard CŒUR-DE-LION ! [Exit.

Scen. III.

A Street in Southwark.

DE EYNSFORD, JOHN OF OXFORD, WALTER MAPES,
 DE BROKE.

DE EYNSFORD. We are nicely pacified, are we not,
 now the king has sent home this belligerent Archbishop
 with the kiss of peace,—to pass it round among us ?

JOHN OF O. Yes? have you ever heard the story of the
 Bear in the Boat? Methought our vessel rehearsed it:
 here sat the Primate i' the middle, clad even over the ears
 with his shaggy ermine, spreading his loose bulk from gun-
 wale to gunwale, growling to himself, and snuffing for prey,
 whilst all the humanity aboard skulked out of his sight to
 the scuttle-holes. I who had been made bear-leader,
 shrank into a most distant follower of his movements:
 now he had got the ring out of his nose, a squeeze from
 him was strangulation and a snap demolition.

MAPES. He would at least have taken such a mouthful
 out of you as the Dragon does out of the full-moon—
 brought your plenitude to the wane—reduced your rotundity
 to the shape of a sickle!—Why, but now I went to pay
 him my humble devoirs, and his complaisance received me
 with a smile like a shark's, as if he would gladly have
 swallowed me wholesale.

DE BROKE. What are offenders so weak as I to look
 for, when my lord Primate of York has been suspended,
 and the two Bishops excommunicated with many others ?

DE EYNSFORD. Unless their journey to Rouen plead
 both their own cause and ours with success, our penitential

knees will have to wear out the Black Mountain in Palestine. He is vindictive as a bloodhound !

JOHN OF O. Be of good hope : they have the King's whole heart already, and need only a little of his ear. This late coming together at Fretville between him and Becket was about as cordial as that between the porcupine and the serpent : they may both have agreed to live crony-like together ; but irascible readiness to bristle in the one, and most swelling venom in the other, will soon make them ill bosom-companions.

MAPES. Methought that kiss of peace the King gave him was not quite so warm as he would have given the Lady Rose. I was just beside his majesty, and he turned him about after it as if he could have spat it on the floor.

JOHN OF O. Yet he stooped with most gracious condescension from his horse, to hold the haughty Prelate's stirrup for him.

DE EYNSFORD. Yea, that was stooping indeed ! not from his horse alone, but his state of honour. I had rather have taken hold of Becket's toe, and tumbled him over his palfrey !

MAPES. Sir Bevis of Southampton on his proud war-horse Arundel, never looked such a self-promising, prodigious deed-doer as Becket on his little ambler.

DE BROKE. Well, and if so, how much more must it exalt him in his own conceit, this besotted adulation of him by the people on his progress to visit the young king ? Woodstock palace will not have a room high enough for his haughtiness !

DE EYNSFORD. Hear you how the base-born churls and citizens applaud him ! Howling beasts !

[*Shouts within.*]

MAPES. Will you go look at them ?

DE EYNSFORD. Who, I ? rather at the infidel dogs fawning and yelping hymns before Mahound !

[*Exit.*]

JOHN OF O. It behoves me to have an eye on the prelate.

MAPES. And me to have both mine on the people, for it is the more curious nondescript of the two.

[*Exit with* JOHN OF OXFORD.

DE BROKE. If I can only keep my spoils from his See by it, I'll consent to be the last bob of the many-headed monster's tail ! Let me join.

[*Exit.*]

*Scene IV.**Before Lambeth Palace.*

BECKET, BOSHAM, *and several Monks* ; CLARE, DE LUCY,
and some Knights. A crowd of the lower order welcom-
ing the Archbishop, who scatters a largesse.

First Mob. Welcome to his Grace, and ill go with them
that wish it not ! Welcome our fellow-citizen, mighty and
worthy, home from France !

Second Mob. Largesse ! largesse ! Cry out more wel-
comes—More welcomes and more largesse !

First Mob. Welcome ! welcome home the father of the
poor ! Welcome the 'fender of the church—largesse ! lar-
gesse !

BEGGARMAN. 'Fender of the church ? ay ! didn't I
foretell when he gave me his cloak long ago, that he'd
come to be a shining 'fender of the church ? and a saint
and a glorious martyr into the bargain ?

BECKET. So have I been, my friends, a very martyr !

Mobs. Long live his grace the martyr !

BECKET. Martyrdom, which I joyed in for your sakes.

Mobs. Heaven grant your Grace the joy of another !

And soon !—Largesse !

BECKET. Thanks for your kindly wishes, though not
words !

Now cease from both.

CLARE. For more than either, say I,
Thanks for their silence ! 'tis the gratefuller.

BECKET. You have no cause to like it, Earl of Clare !

Enter JOHN OF OXFORD, MAPES, and DE BROKE, behind.

CLARE. My gracious lord, I hope yes ; for the King
Informs us here that we are to present
Our kneeling griefs before your Sanctity,
Which is oath-bound by covenant with him,
Stricken of late at Fretville, to absolve
Me and my Lord Justiciary from the censures
Your ire pronounced against us. And we hope
In virtue of your faith and our contrition,
To be ta'en once more to the Church's bosom
As well as your good favour.

DE LUCY. With my own,
Here be petitions also on the part

Of Hugh Earl Chester, Nigel de Sackville,
Thomas Fitz-Bernard, and Archdeacon Radel,
Whom the said covenant gives a similar claim.

BECKET. All of ye were accomplices and abettors
In that most sacrilegious mummary titled
The young king's Coronation; when, last June,
Roger of York dared pour the royal unction
(My privilege sole!) upon Prince Henry's head;
For which the vial of wrath shall scald his own
Into a leprosy!—I will absolve
None of ye! 'Twas a covenant at discretion.

CLARE. What! are you desperate to bring fire and
sword
Into the kingdom?

DE LUCY. Is your olive-branch
Trimm'd for a scourge?

BECKET. My congress hath of late
Been with crown'd heads, wherefore I mell not now
With coronetted ones!
(*To the crowd.*)

On Christmas day
Be it well known, we shall anathematise
Robert de Broke, and Ralph, besides some other
Odd servants of the king.

DE BROKE. O pardon! pardon! [*Falling on his knees.*]

BECKET. Thou cry me pardon? that didst rend and
ravin
My diocese, the endowment of the Church,
With hand, which should have wither'd in such act,
Tearing the coat of Christ!—Even from now
Be an abomination to man's eyes
For ever!

(*DE BROKE attempts to mingle in the crowds, which shun
him with all horror. He rushes out desperately.*)

Friends! let us forth upon our peaceful way
Towards Woodstock, to confer with the young Regent
About the Church's weal, including yours.

Enter DE BOHUN, and Men-at-arms.

DE BOHUN. Archbishop, his young Majesty commands
You pass no further.

BECKET. Not with these rich presents
I bear him as a sign of amity?
Will he not be as placable as Becket?

Although my spiritual thunders may have reft
Three mitres from the usurpers of my state,
That does not touch his crown. He is a king
With my full secular consent ; and soon
Shall have my sacred benison.

DE BOHUN. 'Tis well
You think of it even now ! When he shall hear
This humble parley 'stead of the proud peals
That swell'd with your approach, his horn may chime :
Till then your Grace cannot pass on, nor enter
Any king's burgh ; but must return your steps
To Canterbury straight, and keep the confines
Of your own lands.

BECKET (*aside*). Here's my reward for humbleness !
The virtue of the weak and mean and poor,
A vice in Becket ! (*Aloud*) Who dares stop my way,
Sub-Vicar of St. Peter o'er this realm ?

DE BOHUN. Humfrey de Bohun, Lord High Constable,
Of that same realm : a name and title proud
As loyal subject ever wore !—Stand fast,
My men-at-arms !

BECKET. Lord Constable, will ye
Damn by this deed Humfrey de Bohun ?

DE BOHUN. No, do it thou !—thy lips are grown fire-
proof

With uttering fulminations that would blister
A bugle's mouth to blast them forth.—Sound out,
Trumpeters there ! and pikemen, clear the way !

[*Trumpets drown the voice of BECKET, who retires in
furious chagrin before the advancing pikes.
Monks, Crowds, and BOSHAM, follow.*]

DE BOHUN. I did not like to let his dragon-tongue
Hiss round us, and launch forth its sulphury flames
To singe my ensign and appal my men :
Tough Humfrey's self cares little for anathemas
More than for old wive's blessings : both, foul wind !
[*Exit after the Soldiers.*]

CLARE. Mark'd you how pale and purple Becket grew
By turns ?

DE LUCY. I ne'er saw face so mortified !

MAPES. It looked as grim and ghastly on his neck
Which bore it up stone-stiff, with chin in air,
As doth a felon's stuck o' the city gates.

JOHN OF O. Now will he to his Saltwood shades, and
 make
 Black blood there; now he will spit venom at us,
 As strong with gall as ever oozed from heart
 So rancorous and so fester'd.

CLARE. Let it be! [Exeunt.

Scene I.

The Queen's Apartment at Windsor.

ELEANOR. PRINCE RICHARD and PRINCE JOHN at games.

ELEANOR. My doughty Urchin, that would thrust her
 head
 Into the snap-trap, comes not back. I guess'd
 Malice so sanguine defter to deceive
 Itself than others. Though she can transmute
 Those loose joints and flab features to all shapes
 But one not hideous,—such that I scarce know
 My own familiar devil when it appears,
 Deforming her deformity still more,—
 The hellicat hath been caught, and nine times kill'd,
 Else she had stolen to me ere now. I've lost
 My ablest minister, and must be henceforth
 Both council and executive myself.
 Yet I am all at fault!—They say this boy,
 In his wild hardihood, broke fence at Woodstock,
 For which the Warder sends him home but now:
 Perchance his errantry hath some apt thing
 Discover'd, and his innocence may betray it?
 Come hither, Dick Plantagenet!

RICHARD. Madam, ay.

ELEANOR. So, sir, you broke into the Labyrinth?

RICHARD. Yes.

ELEANOR. Spite of penalties which make me pale
 With fear.—Even to the Bowery Palace?

RICHARD. Yes.

ELEANOR. Iron-head! And where then?

RICHARD. Why to be sure
 Into the Bower itself!—O fairy-land!

ELEANOR. Well, and whom saw ye?

RICHARD. Saw?—the Fairy Queen!
 At least the Queen of Fair Ones! Would I were
 But big enough to be her knight!—I'll tell you:

As we sat feasting in her "chamber-precious"
(So it is call'd), with foliage all festoon'd,
There was a maiden-blush hung by her cheek
(Do ye know what a maiden-blush is, Madam?)
And her cheek look'd the prettier rose of the two,
Though white her brow as lily o' the valley.
That is the reason, now I think of it,
She is named Rosamond—fair Rosamond.

ELEANOR. O ! 'twas the minion then herself !

RICHARD. The minion ?
Minion ! minion ?—O you'd say *Mignonne*,
French for our home-word, darling ?—Yes, it was :
Would I were with her now, instead of here !

ELEANOR. Couldst find thy way back thither, think you,
lad,
To feast in that same bower once more with her
Your maggot-pate so runs on ?

RICHARD. Let me try !
It has a thousand marks I can remember :
Let me, good Mother !

ELEANOR. You'll take me along ?
RICHARD. You ?—O you'd be a spoil-feast ! You
would sour
The wine ; and keep me much too strict ; O, no !
I could not take you with me.

ELEANOR. See what's here :
A silver-hafted poll-axe, which I got
Made for you, when you proved a docile boy.

RICHARD. I am a docile boy : give it me straight !
[*Snatching it.*]

ELEANOR. Now what are those same marks which you
remember
To trace your path with through that winding maze ?—
Let me but reach its heart, and I shall soon
Reach that of its foul Mistress !

RICHARD. O ho, ho !—
Yes, I have heard you are very jealous of her,
Because she is so beautiful and young.
Here, take your silver toy again !—My wooden one
Can give as stout a thwack. I am no traitor !

ELEANOR. No, but a naughty rebel !—Tell me all
Thou know'st, or I will cuff thee !

RICHARD. Do, good Mother !—
She'll only hurt her hand upon my brawn,

And cry for pain, when she can give me none!

ELEANOR (*shaking him*). Tell me, thou stubborn—

RICHARD. Not one word of it!

By Mahound I will not!

ELEANOR. Hear how the monkey
Takes on the man! Talks of his maiden blushes,
And swears his Mahounds and his Tyrmagaunts
Like a bronzed warrior!—Incorrigible!
Thou'rt not my son!

RICHARD. No! Sour-faced Jack i' the corner,
He is your own, own son; I am the King's!

ELEANOR. Like him as lion's cub is to the lion,
Tan-hair'd and huge-limb'd, hot-brain'd and head-strong.

RICHARD. Yea, and heart-strong!—Did not Fair Rosamond

Christen me *Cœur-de-Lion*? better I wot
Than "duck" and "chick" you nickname brother John.

ELEANOR. And what so gallant had you done, that she
So call'd you, my fine Squire of Dames?

RICHARD. Your ear!

ELEANOR. Well? [*Bending down.*]

RICHARD. [*Shouting a song.*] "*Chantons Roland! le preux et puissant!*"

Ha! ha! ha! ha!

ELEANOR. Get to thy chamber, thou unnatural knave!
Thou shalt have bread and water for three days!

RICHARD. Anything but the goodies you give John
To gulp—panado and sweet pap—I hate them!
"*Chantons Roland! le preux et puissant!*"

[*Marches out singing.* ELEANOR following.

ELEANOR. Perverse, undutiful little villain! None
Can tame him, save the king, and with a strength
The father of his own. Get to thy chamber!

Scene VI.

Porch of Westminster Abbey. A Snow-storm.

DE BROKE outside on his knees, in squalid penitential attire.

Enter persons of different ages, sexes, and conditions, who pass into the Church. Some turn away their heads from DE BROKE with horror and scorn and detestation; some hide their faces in their hands, some spit at him: the children throw ashes and filth, the old women scowl upon him, banning and reviling.

A procession of Nuns, who all close their veils and make a sign of the cross as they go by him. A procession of Monks, who all pull over their cowls, and cross themselves; the last puts into DE BROKE'S hand a scourge.

Enter then a Laybrother going to the Refectory with provisions, on which he is regaling himself.

DE BROKE (*to the Laybrother*). I starve!

[*The Laybrother flings a bare bone at him.*

DE BROKE. O mercy! but one drop to warm

My freezing veins!

[*The Laybrother flings an empty flask at him, and exit.*

Scene VII.

Saltwood Grange in Kent. Monks and Serfs employed at rural labours.

BECKET and JOHN OF SALISBURY *girt up as woodcutters.*

JOHN OF S. O how it glads me, my dear lord, to see you Peacefully here among us! thus employ'd
In labours wholesome to the body and mind
Refreshing, sweetening, fortifying both,
For blood the sap is of the total man
Which feeds his powers throughout. Why do you start?
Is not the pigmiest creature of us all
In that a very Antæus, that he gathers
New strength each time from Earth's maternal breast,
When he is thrown upon it?

BECKET.

You are classical!

JOHN OF S. So says your lip, your nostril says—pedantic.
'Twas the fit word, 'twas the fit word in sooth!
But these old fables, let me tell you, are
Often of larger, richer truth than facts.
Pass that!—I say our good St. Benedict
Ne'er show'd himself more Solomon in his rules.
Than when he this enjoin'd upon his Order:
Give your minds hands; marry the practical
To the contemplative, that joint fruit may follow
With all the juice of both, earthful, ethereal.

BECKET. 'Twas a good rule: so be it.

JOHN OF S.

Here as thou stand'st

Amongst thy household, like a Patriarch,
While clouds are thickening o'er us, I could deem thee

A Noah, when heaven's flood about to burst,
Ponder'd above the world.

BECKET. Let it come down,
We are prepared for it !

JOHN OF S. No, not quite yet :
We must fall to a little. [*Beginning to hew.*]

BECKET. Simpleton !
He cannot understand this weighty moment
When there's a flood indeed may sweep us all
Into confounding ruin.

JOHN OF S. Is not this better,
Drawing moist fragrance from the rural air
Than adding our foul sweat to the reek o' the city ?
This hurtless war against the yielding trees,
Than broils with kings and barons ?

BECKET. John, I tell you,
Hurtless as this cool war to you may seem,
'Twill end in blood !

JOHN OF S. Blood ?—I've read something
Like it in Virgil.

BECKET. You are a dreamer, John !
You know not what we speak of. I do tell ye
This quarrel cannot end except in blood.
Are you awake ? have you no eyes ? no ears ?
The King forswears himself, foregoes with me
All his concessions, promises, oaths, pacts !
Here am I sent to Saltwood home in shame
By that miscrownèd Youth they call a King,
Whom as a very mistress I set out
To woo with flattering words and dazzling gifts !

JOHN OF S. But where the need to dazzle him or flatter,
If you brought honest homage, liege affection ?
Why did you, first, declining to absolve
Those Bishops on their penitence, give cause
King Harry should decline from favouring you ?

BECKET. The Bishops !—John, there is some buzz abroad.
You would be one !

JOHN OF S. I am to be, good sooth,
By the King's gracious offer.

BECKET. Ay, indeed ?
Small wonder then you take his part against me !

JOHN OF S. Becket, you could not such mean thoughts
surmise

In me, were all your own magnanimous !

From heart unsound proceeds a breath which taints
 The fame it blows on. Did you whilome take
 The King's part, then, but to be made archbishop?
 I deem'd it was through conscience,—though you changed!
 Are these your acts, ostensive for the Church,
 But to exalt, enrich, empower yourself?
 In truth this has been “buzzed,” and loud enough,
 Yet with the bigotry of friendship, John
 Thought ’twas by wasps and idle gnats alone!

BECKET. Forgive me, John: but I feel even the globe
 Hollow beneath me; treason hems me round;
 Destruction hatches under mine own eaves,
 Broods in the grove beside us. Even the Church,
 False to herself, cannot be true to me:
 Does she not now adulterate with the King,
 His Holiness being pandar? bribed thereto
 By his rich-worded promises to stop
 Fierce Barbarossa's rage,—a gilded bait
 Which only gudgeons catch at! Every Nuncio,
 Yea the whole Conclave, fill their purse with gems
 Torn from the English Mitre. Louis of France,
 My steadiest prop till now, begins to wax
 Rotten at core, and fails me at most need.
 Ah, simple John! the world is not so smooth
 As scholars dream.

JOHN OF S. I did not say ’twas smooth,
 Unless men take it smoothly.

BECKET. Wise good man!
 (*Aside.*) Blockhead! who cannot see conspiracy
 Darken and thicken like those sinister rooks
 Upon the trees above us; nay, even hear it
 Croaking in hoarse accord, like them, for carnage!
 (*Aloud.*) I muse on what you say: how best to meet
 With calmest dignity the coming storm.
 ’Twill come, be sure, and soon: for I know well
 The king holds by his Constitutions yet
 Stubborn, as by his crown. ’Tis all cajolery
 This truce with Louis, with the Pope, with me;
 But to gain time and pick occasion
 For his unsleeping purpose. Becket alone
 Awakes to baffle it, and can, and will,—
 Let him thereafter sleep as dead a sleep
 As e’er laid head upon a pillow of dust!

JOHN OF S. Not all alone: I’m with thee to the last!

BECKET. Come on then! Thou shalt see my power
compel

This proud king on his knees to me, albeit
The struggle lay me, too, breathless on earth! [*Exit.*]

JOHN OF S. Would there were less of passion and of pride
In our self-sacrifice! oft made for self,
For our own glorification, when we seem
Devoted all for others! Yet he thinks
It is the Church he serves, and if so, Heaven
Pardon him if he hurts her in himself! [*Exit.*]

Scene VIII.

A Wood.

Enter FITZ-URSE.

FITZ-URSE. Here was our trysting-place; by that bald
oak
Riven from the crown to root; they could not miss it.
So, you are come!

Enter BRITO.

BRITO. What cheer!

FITZ-URSE. Eh! you can see:
The place is white with bones left by wild hounds
And ravens; there's no other cheer for us.

BRITO. Sorry enough. Know you aught of the others?

FITZ-URSE. Tortoises! slow worms! laggards! But
what needs

More than our two stout selves?

BRITO. Nay, the whole town
Is for him: we must have a dozen more.
If our friends come here and not find us, they
Will raise the shire with noise. De Traci chatters
More than a cage of monkeys: we must wait.

FITZ-URSE. Heard you no trampling? Why do they
bring their horses
To litter here?

BRITO. Only a carrier: mark
How cautiously he skirts the wood about;
It is an ill-reputed place.

Enter DE MORVILLE and DE TRACI.

FITZ-URSE. Sirs, we had turn'd
Almost to stocks and stones, with standing here

In watch for you.

DE TRACI. *Pardon!* good son of Urse.

DE MORVILLE. Is all agreed? are we to kill him straight?

BRITO. Ay, if he do not yield.

DE TRACI. Descend, or fall!

DE MORVILLE. He'll never yield; it is as vain as praying

This oak to bow, or be cut down.

FITZ-URSE. Hark, gentlemen:

Debate it as ye will, I am resolved:

My king shall never say again before me,

"Have I no friend will rid me of this pest?"

BRITO. Ay, while he raised his passionate hands, to hear

The Bishops' plaint.

DE TRACI. And spake of "recreant knights!"

DE MORVILLE. Who were sustained by him, without sustaining!

FITZ-URSE. Stop ye, or go? Strike, or shill-shall-I?

All. On! [*Exeunt.*]

Scene IX.

A By-way in the Labyrinth.

ELEANOR and DWERGA.

DWERGA. Hither, dull grandam!—this way; here's the clue.

See where it threads the quickset roots along

Under those nettles, thistles, and rank weeds,

Pale glittering like the Fatal Sisters' yarn

Went out of dead man's skin.

ELEANOR. 'Tis broken here.

DWERGA. 'Tis thou, most sovereign beldam, art blear-sighted!

I, as the dew-born spider, span it slim

Out of my ropy venom, but scarce breakable.

Peer, peer about!—there 'tis again: some reptile

Hath dragg'd it thus awry.

ELEANOR. How didst thou manage

To lay it so adroit?

DWERGA. Even though mine eyes

Were film'd with slime out of the leech-pond there,

Into which that curst whelp of thee and Satan,

Lubberly Dick (whom I will plague anon !),
 When blows had stunn'd me quite, couching his club.
 Butted poor Dwerga like a battering-ram !—
 Yet forth I trail'd me soon ; and while these orbs
 Were dim as leaden ones, I laid the clue
 Sly as thou see'st it ! Was it not well done ?

ELEANOR. Shrewdly. Where is it now ?

DWERGA. Here, i' the ditch.

O 'twas well done of Dwerga ! as emball'd
 Urchin-like, she did bowl herself unseen
 By the dusk hedges and rush-cover'd channels,
 Out of the maze as she had trandled in !
 Hu ! hu ! hex ' hex !

ELEANOR. The Bower ! the Bower !

DWERGA. Trot on !

Now we shall have a frolic worth the venture !—

Trot on, sweet grandam ! [Sings.

'Speckle-black toad and freckle-green frog,' &c.

Hu ! hu ! hex ! [Exeunt.

Scene changes to the Bower inside.

ROSAMOND *alone.*

ROSAMOND. My spirits are heavy, and they lend all
 things

Their own dark nature ! See how the evening sun
 Fills this green chamber with a golden gloom ;
 The broider'd tapestry waves its lustrous folds
 Dismal, as o'er some breathless Dame laid here
 In proud, sad state ; yon cricket chirps as loud
 And quick, as sounds a larum-bell by night ;
 And when that sweet bird twitter'd past the bower,
 Methought it was the screech-owl. O how long
 Since I felt happy !—Since I left the heaven
 Of innocent girlhood, when even sorrow's drops
 Were bright and transient as an angel's tears.
 Can I not pray ? When innocent, night and morn
 I always pray'd for happiness, and it came.
 Pray !—yet repent not of your sin !—Far worse
 Than the mute sin itself. I will go back
 To Godstowe once again ; I will beseech
 The Nuns receive me as a truant wretch
 Weigh'd down to heart-prostration by my guilt,

And there upon my face at Mercy's shrine
Beg for an age of suffering to wash out
The stain which blots my youth—

ELEANOR (*from behind*). Wash it out here,
With this ! (*showing a phial*). It is a lotion most abstersive ;
'Twill cleanse you monumental-white, and save
A world of holy water !

ROSAMOND. Art thou a demon,
Or Eleanor the Queen ?

ELEANOR. Either you like,
Or both, if it please you. There's my familiar !

ROSAMOND. Ah ! fiend assured, that canst return from
hell,

Whither young Richard sent thee !

DWERGA. Hu ! hu ! hex !
Take to thy sucking bottle, pretty child !
Take to it, lovesome ! 'Tis more precious milk
Than the slow-dribbling poppy gives : yea better
Than the black suckle from my dam I drew,
Which makes me such a darling !

ROSAMOND. Fearful thing !
Comest thou to tear me through my opening grave
Into the house of torment for my sins ?

DWERGA. Just so !—But feel how tenderly I'll grip
Thy soft white limbs with my beak'd claws ! No blood
Shall ooze from them but I will kiss it up
Fond as a gloating lover, and each wound
Sear with hot caustic breath !—Try it, my sweetling !

ROSAMOND. Save me, ah save me, thou more human
form !

DWERGA. Let me upon her ! my fangs itch.

ELEANOR. Abide :

It were too soon to put her out of pain.
Tell me, young Mistress !—Nay, keep on your knees ;
No succour hears thee ; good Sir Fier-à-bras
Has been grave-sick these three days, and no other
Dares front the Queen ;—tell me, thou smooth-faced Witch !
What sorceries didst thou practise, to beguile
My husband of his troth—what sinful arts ?

ROSAMOND. None, as I am most sinful, but what nature
Taught him to wile we with—alas the day !

ELEANOR. Ay, wilt thou boast thee of thy natural charms
Above all aid from art ? Thou dog-briar Rose !

Thou vile, poor, daggled, village-garden Rose !
 Thou stuck upon the bosom of a king,
 As the prime flower of England ?

ROSAMOND. All unmeet :
 But 'twas love, not ambition, fixed me there !

ELEANOR. Love ! dost avouch it, brazen of tongue and brow.

ROSAMOND. Ay me, is ever truth a wrong ?

ELEANOR. Audacious !

Dost thou, a base-born peasant Girl, dare vie
 With Eleanor of Guienne for a king's heart ?

ROSAMOND. I am a daughter of De Clifford, dame !
 A high-born, high-soul'd race, till sunk in me.
 But farewell pride !—'tis for the pure alone ;
 Vain flourish even for them, since humble or proud,
 We are all equal in our winding-sheets,
 The country-maid and queen !

ELEANOR. No rug, vile Wretch,
 Shall wind thy harlot corse ! It shall be cast
 Upon the cross-road, as a gaze for men,
 A glut for dogs and daws !

ROSAMOND. O Queen, some pity
 To thy own sex !

ELEANOR. That thy so vaunted beauty
 Be first the mock of every tongue, and end
 The horror of all eyes !

ROSAMOND. O rather, rather
 Bury me breathing quick ten feet in earth,
 Build me up in these walls, and my last look
 Shall stare dumb pardon on thee !

ELEANOR. Drink off this !—
 Here's a love-potion from me in return
 For that thou gavest the king, to warm his blood
 Tow'rds thee his paramour, freeze it towards his spouse.
 Drain it up, sorceress !—no words, no prayers !

ROSAMOND. One moment, if thou'rt not inexorable,
 To plead with Heaven.

ELEANOR. 'Tis deafer still than I !

ROSAMOND. But to confess my sins—

ELEANOR. Fool, they are flagrant !
 In hell itself renown'd !—Hither, good Fury ! [To DWERGA.
 Howl through her brain, flame round her with your eyes,
 If she put off the cup once more, cling to her
 And poison her with your kisses !

DWERGA. Let me ! I'll screw
Her soul out in my tortuous clasp—

ROSAMOND. To the dregs !
[*She drinks off the poison.*]

'Tis bitter—as they hate !—fierce—as thy rage !
My head swims !—Mercy, Heaven !—Too cruel Queen !
Relent when I am dead—O give me burial !
Cast me not out to gaze—Henry ! defender !
The fiends are here !—Thy Rosamond is—no more ! [*Dies.*]

ELEANOR. The King's name on her lips even to the last !
She shall bleach for it !

DWERGA. There's a drying wind
Out now, will make a precious mummy of her,
And with her thus thou canst present the King
To hang up in his cabinet as a study,
Like a stuff'd alligator—hu ! hu ! hex !

ELEANOR. Fair Rosamond ? Pale Rosamond, now, I
ween !

DWERGA. Foul Rosamond she shall be, foul as she fair
had been !—

There's a quaint rhyme for thee !—I will turn minstrel
And make a doleful ditty of this drone—

“Fair Rosamond done to death in her sweet Bower,
By cruel Eleanor, that wicked Queen !”

It shall be famous ! you shall have your meed,
As Cain's most pitiless Daughter, from mankind !

ELEANOR. Make me not tremble, now I've done the
deed,

With diabolic drolling : it and this
Would give a stone the shudders. Let's begone ! [*Exit.*]

DWERGA. I'll plague thee raving-mad with it each night,
Till thou shalt wish to sleep as sound as she !

Dwerga will be thy *Incubus* ; and more,
Thy *Succubus* too, fattening upon thy gall,
And laughter at thy follies—hu ! hu ! hex ! [*Exit after her.*]

Scene X.

An Inn on the Road near Canterbury.

Enter a Pursuivant-at-Arms and an Ostler.

PURSUIVANT. Get me another horse for the king's duty
—all bone and sinew, hark'ee ! Shift the housings from
my jade, fit or no fit, and in a trice—if you wouldn't have

your hands cut off and nailed behind you, like a kite's wings on a barn-door!

OSTLER. Yes, sir! (*Aside*) I'll bespeak you a toss i' the mire for that: the waters are out, you shall be made to play duck-and-drake in them! [*Exit.*]

PURSUIVANT. This crime will be consummate ere I reach them;

And church, prince, people, overwhelm'd in sorrow:
Themselves will walk the world with foreheads sear'd,
Every man's hand against them. Fie on their zeal!
Thus kings have ever-ready slaves to give
Their words the worst translation into acts,
For which the original's blamed: or vantage take
Of royal ire to sate their rascal own.

I fool the time!—My roadster, ho!—not yet? *Exit.*

Scene XI.

Canterbury. An Apartment in the Archbishopal Mansion.

BECKET, JOHN OF SALISBURY, and HENRY BOSHAM.

JOHN OF S. I cannot cease my prayers—nay my rebukes,
Though you of consecrated wisdom are
Prime in all England. You have been too stern,
Imperious and impatient with these men.
I tell you they are not negotiators
Commission'd by the king. Did you not mark
That fellow whose straight, black brows, met i' the front,
How he pursed up his lips, nor seem'd to hear
One word, or pro or con, but kept his eyes
Piercing the ground, his right hand on his hilts?

BOSHAM. One Reginald Fitz-Urse.

BECKET. I know it well:
Soldiers are cut-throats in the king's livery,
Murderers whom the laws make gallows-free.

JOHN OF S. Why then provoke them with such bitter taunts,

Such scorn intolerant and intolerable?— [*Noise without.*]
They are return'd!—I knew it!

BOSHAM. My dear lord,
I'm a weak timorous scholar; but for you
Feel myself strong both arm and soul to die:
'Tis not my cowardice speaks—flee, flee, dear Master!

BECKET. Becket resists the Devil, and He shall flee!

Enter GRYME hastily.

GRYME. To the Church! to the sanctuary! fly! fly! fly!

BECKET. Have they got in?

GRYME. De Broke, that privy traitor,
Mad to be excommunicated beyond all grace,
Hath join'd, and leads them up the postern-stairs,
When we had barr'd the portal.

BECKET. How soon, think you,
Will they have burst their way to us?

GRYME. Five doors!

BECKET. Five oaken, clouted doors?—Fetch me my robes.

JOHN OF S. My gracious lord—my friend—upon my knees—

[Kneeling to him.]

BECKET. Richard, obey me!—All in time, good John!
Get up and help me to array.

[Noise without.]

My alb—

My pall—my sandals; let me have the mitre—

You hurry, John: be calm; more haste worse speed!

Now, where's my crosier? *[Noise approaches.]*

Henry Bosham, you

Go to my almary, here's the key (remember

'Tis somewhat stiff, so force it not!), and fetch me

My emperor of rings, bright *Peretot*

Jewelry—all—

[Exit BOSHAM, and soon returns.]

JOHN OF S. *(to himself)*. I know not which to name it,

Grandeur of soul or pettiness, pride of state,

Contempt of peril, calm from sense of right,

Or contradictiveness insane!

BECKET *(putting on the ring)*. I'm ready.

Nay, my precedence is to be preceded,

The greatest comes the last. Go ye before me. *[Exeunt.]*

FITZ-URSE, DE MORVILLE, DE TRACI, BRITO, DE BROKE,
and others, break in.

Conspirators. Where is the traitor? where? where? he
is fled!

DE BROKE. Here is a secret passage to the Church:
Thither the wild beast scours as to his den,
I'll wind it like a terrier after him,
And lead the pack into his very lair:
Follow me, friends!

[Exeunt.]

*Scene XII.**St. Benedict's Chapel in the Cathedral.*

BECKET *before the Altar.* JOHN OF SALISBURY, BOSHAM,
GRYME.

BECKET. Who closed that door?—Open it, I command!
What! will ye make a Castle of a Church?

The Conspirators rush in.

DE TRACI. Where is the traitor?

BRITO. Where is the Archbishop?

BECKET. Here am I, an Archbishop, but no traitor!

DE MORVILLE. Will you absolve the Prelates?

BECKET. No!

BRITO. Will you to Winchester,

And beg the young King's grace, for your attempt
Most traitorous to discrown him?

BECKET. I made none,
And will beg grace of none, save God on high!

DE TRACI. You are my prisoner;—come along, proud
traitor!

BECKET. Take off that impious hand, which dares pro-
fane

My stole immaculate; or I will shake thee,
Vile reptile, off, and trample thee in the dust!

Bosham, let be!—I have an arm as stout

As any stalking Norman of them all!—

Away! [*He casts DE TRACI from him, who draws.*]

DE TRACI. (*Aiming at BECKET, strikes off the arm of*
RICHARD GRYME.)

Get thee a wooden one, thou false confessor,
To bless thee with! thou supple, whispering knave!

BECKET *and his friends are assaulted by the Conspirators,*
many of whom BECKET overthrows.

FITZ-URSE. Here strikes King Harry!

BECKET. [*Cleaving BECKET down.*
Excrabilis esto! [*Dies.*]

Scene closes.

Scene XIII.

Before the Cathedral.

Enter Pursuivant as from the porch.

Pursuivant. [T]oo late ! too late ! O how the King will
grieve !

O murderous sacrilege ! beyond all tongues
To cry out aught upon but Woe ! Woe ! Woe !
Woe to both king and kingdom ! Years of tears
Will not from yonder chapel-floor wash out
The bloody desecration of such blots
As make the heart bleed through the eyes to see them !—
Woe to the nation, woe ! [Exit.

Scene XIV.

St. Benedict's Chapel.

*The ceremony of a Lustration performed by Monks and
secular Clergy. A procession.*

Scene XV.

*Choir of Canterbury Cathedral to the left St. Benedict's
Chapel.*

*Becket's corpse on a bier. Crowds of visitors, some gazing at
the death-place, some at the body, or paying it veneration
by kneeling around it, touching it, kissing the Primatial
robes, insignia, &c.*

JOHN OF SALISBURY. BOSHAM. JOHN OF OXFORD.

JOHN OF S. Lo ! how the multitude flock in !—'Tis
strange

This thing so soon was known ; Bosham and I
Were too heart-sick to speak of it ; and Gryme
Is in a trance of agony even yet,
Through loss of limb and lord.

JOHN OF O. When did it happen ?

JOHN OF S. Near about Vesper time.

JOHN OF O. Methinks the news
Spread with the curfew knell over all England,
Even in a moment : 'twas miraculous !
I heard it scarce more late at London Tower ;

And deem'd it that strange mockery of sound
Which oft its echoing shell makes of our ear,
Or yet more strange intelligence presaged
By what we dread is true ;—but every face
Round me was pale-struck also, each foot stopt
Howe'er precipitate, hands were half raised,
Or placed to still the beatings of the heart,
As if some thunderous blare had rent the sky
And all drew breath to hear the Doom-word follow.

JOHN OF S. Most strange ! Both town and country are
afoot ;

You'd think an earthquake of the total Isle
Had roused them from their beds. See how they troop,
Jostling with fear, haste, and confusion.

JOHN OF O. The place will be a pilgrimage ere long,
So revered was this man.

JOHN OF S. And is the more
That Death enrolls him now among the Martyrs.
Some royalty has enter'd, to do honour,
Or mourn with us—alas ! alas !

JOHN OF O. The Queen.

ELEANOR *approaches hastily, and kneels at the foot of the bier.*

JOHN OF S. How very white her Highness looks !

JOHN OF O. Nay, haggard ;
She must be wayworn sadly. Hark ! she mutters :
Does she forget she's in a crowd and church ?
Not at her *priedien* ?

ELEANOR. O most holy Becket !
Pray for me, make my peace with ireful heaven,
Thou who hast now such influence o'er the Saints
As new amongst them, and above them all
Rank'd by thy bleeding crown of Martyrdom !—
Eleanor is uneasy in her soul :
Give me some sign of favour, and thy tomb
I'll circle with an orb of golden urns
Flaming perpetual incense ! Tell me how
To quell this troublous spirit.

[*The Shade of Rosamond rises at the head of the Bier.*

Shade. Pitiless Queen !

How canst thou hope repose unto thy spirit,
Denying it to my unhappy clay !

ELEANOR. Help to the Queen of England !—Guards
there !—help !

Stand between her and me ! Let her not gaze
So ghastly on me thus !

JOHN OF S. Who is it offends
Your grace !

ELEANOR. She !—she !—that fixes on me there
Her marble eyes.

JOHN OF S. 'Tis but the statued form
Of a young Martyress.

ELEANOR. I know it well,
Hate's martyress and mine !—Fair Rosamond !
Art thou not she ?

Shade. Rosamond once called Fair !
Poor Rosamond who never wish'd thee harm !
Thy husband loved thee not, and 'twas 'gainst thee
Small crime, that faith, thou nor preserved nor prized,
Plighted itself to me.—My death was merciless
Beyond all need or measure : that fierce drink
Which rack'd me inwardly and warped my form
Unseemliest to behold, might have been spared,
For thy fierce words had slain me.

ELEANOR. 'Twas not I
Prepared the drug—false Geber, the physician !

Shade. Is this pale presence dreadful as the fear
Of that grim fiend thou brought'st to torture me
Before my time in hell ?

ELEANOR. The fiend-like creature
Work'd me to work thy death—I was her slave !

JOHN OF S. List how to her own fearful Fantasy
She shrives herself !—'Tis a sad self-exposure.

Shade. I am fate's herald here : Thy name shall stand
A breviary of all abhorr'd in woman ;
Thy memory shall be made eterne on earth
By the immortal hatred of mankind.
Thou shalt be still the slavish tool of those
Who serve, to mock thee ! and thy wickedness
Shall be the womb of what shall breed thee woe.
Thy Eldest Son,—his nature weak, by thee
Distempered,—shall die ere his prime : thy Second
In it, by death ignoble, after a flourish
Glorious though brief, and spirit gall'd with chains ;
Early and sadly shall thy Third Son perish,
Thy Grand-child too, earlier, sadder still,
Blasting the hopes of England in their flower.
Thy Fourth, thy other self in manlike form,

Thine idol, because thine own image true,
 Shall live as miserable from his crimes,
 His mean, low, lustful, jealous, coward heart,
 As thou from thine ; and meet a similar death
 To that thou wrought'st for me, but wretcheder still,
 Unpitied his by all the world, as mine
 By thee alone !

ELEANOR. I am relentful now !—
 Thy corse shall virginly be deckt—be borne
 With richest care to Godstowe, and interr'd
 Like an apparent sovereign, as thou wert
 In thine own chapel—so thou wilt not haunt me '

Shade. Let decent rite and ceremonial due
 Be paid, even to the lowliest form of dust
 That Heaven's breath sanctified though sin defiled,
 As to the mightiest. 'Tis a solemn claim
 Humanity has upon humanity ;
 And thou wilt do no worse fulfilling it,
 Than offering base obeisance to this clay,
 A servile adoration and absurd,
 Dishonouring those who render and receive it.—

Prosper as thou deserv'st. I leave thee now. [*Vanishes.*]

JOHN OF O. The Queen faints : bear her to the open
 cloister ! [*She is borne off.*]

JOHN OF S. My friend, and my heart's Daughter, in one
 day

Lost to me, both !—I have done some great wrong,
 And will repent for it, though I know it not.
 O what will say the King ? He'll be the sufferer,
 First in himself, then through his people all ;
 His penance will be bitterest that e'er man
 Endured for weetless sin or wilful crime.

Scene closes.

ETHELSTAN
OR, THE BATTLE OF BRUNANBURH

PERSONS

- ETHELSTAN, *King of Wessex.*
 EDMUND ETHELING, *Brother of ETHELSTAN.*
 TURKETUL, *Chancellor.*
 ALGER, } *Thanes.*
 GODERIC, }
 PRIOR of *St. John's Monastery at Beverley.*
 ANLAF, *a Danish King*
 CONSTANTINE, *King of Scotland.*
 EDWAL, *Prince of North Wales.*
 FERGUS, *Son of Constantine, a Hostage at ETHELSTAN'S Court.*
 HACO, *Prince of Norway, Pupil and Guest of ETHELSTAN.*
 FRODA, } *Sea-Kings.*
 GORM, }
 EGIL SKILLAGRYM, *a Norwegian Skald.*
 BRUERN, *a Sword-bearer.*
Body-guard of House-Carls, Chiefs, Soldiers, Attendants, etc.
 EDGITHA, *ETHELSTAN'S Sister, Ex-Queen of Northumbria, and Abbess of Beverley Convent.*
 ELLISIF, *a Probationer at Beverley Convent.*
 RUNILDA, *a Glee-Maiden.*

ETHELSTAN

OR, THE BATTLE OF BRUNANBURH

ACT I.

Scene I.

Cloisters of St. John's Church, Beverley. A Tomb and recumbent Statue seen within. Moonlight.

ELLISIF *pacing the Cloisters disturbedly.* BRUERN *hearing after her a sword.*

ELLISIF. Follow me still, thou spectre of this gloom !
That shrink'st from light's soft shaft as from a spear ;
Follow me still with sliding echoless step
Round these dim alleys !—Demon shadow thou,
Cast by hell's flame gigantic on the wall,
O'er my dark thoughts to fling thy murkier nature
And shape me out dread doings with thy sword :
I understand thy flourishes,—too well !
The devil within us never wants a seconder
Outside, to tarre him on : follow me still !—

[Paces mutely for a time.]

Yet whither and for what thus stalk we here
Over the low-roof'd chambers of the dead,
Stepping from grave to grave ? Is it to gibber
And play the sad ghost ?—fright fools ?—and be frightened
Ourselves at cockcrow ?—Why, alas ! ne'er rest we
Where all are slumbering in heart-still repose ?
Yea, even the o'er-watch'd lamp shuts his dim eye,
And gazes feebly on his shrine no more ;
The wandering Moon herself sleeps on the battlements ;
Nought save the wind is up !—Weary of spirit
And flesh, yet in our eager wills unworn,
We linger, linger still where our hearts lie
Buried with those we love !—Ay, there he moulders,
Look, if thou canst through blood-thick tears, there lies
Thy murder'd lord and mine !

BRUERN.

The truth will out.

Oceans upon me could not stifle it !

'Twas Ethelstan, the tiger who now wears

This lion's ravin'd crown, 'twas Ethelstan

Robb'd him of his more precious life besides !

ELLISIF. That's well ! that's well ! mutter that to me still !

Breathe like an Evil Genius in mine ear

Sharp whispers of revenge !—O Edwin, Edwin,

My princely love, my kingly that shouldst be,

Stoop'st thou indeed thy blooming cheek so low

For vile worms' gluttonous kisses ?—is thy beauty

Clasp'd—not in these warm, woman's arms—close !—close !—

But to Death's bosom in a winding-sheet ?

O horrible image, dream of my despair,

Less horrible than the truth !—I pry'thee, soldier,

Lend me this glaymore—

BRUERN.

Madam—

ELLISIF (*wresting the sword*).

Fool ! I mean not

That poor-soul'd piece of heroism, self-slaughter :

O no ! the miserablest day we live

There's many a better thing to do than die !—

'Tis but to press an oath on it with my lips

That, as the insidious ivy of the tower,

Mantling her deed, amidst embraces brings

His proud head to the dust, I'll weave a net

Of subtleties around this Upstart's throne,

Which strength unseen shall then drag down to earth,

And bury him in the ruins !

BRUERN.

Cursed fratricide

Done on the rightful heritor of Wessex,

By one but half-blood kinsman to a king !

What gave he the liege lord of all the land,

Edwin, his true-born elder ?—What, forsooth ?

A boat !—grown green with tufted rottenness,

(So rank that very toadstools sprouted from it !)

And then—his choice of the sea-rocks ! For a crew

My single self !—Thus he, and all thy fortunes

Waiting thee as his Queen, were wreck'd and lost ;

The while this wolf's whelp by a shepherd's daughter—

At best, her base-begotten by King Edward—

Jumping on our legitimate Edwin's throne,

Sits now, from Dover Cliff to Dunbar Crags,

Despot o'er Dane-lagh and all Angle-land !

ELLISIF. A potent conqueror he has been; I grant it;
The winged serpent has flown far and wide
Over our Isle,—the Dragon Flag of Wessex.

BRUERN. It was his inward serpent stung him on;
He strove to stun it in the din of arms,—
Drown it amid the bloody waves of fight,—
Outride it on the whirlwind of his rage
'Gainst Pict, Scot, Cumbrian, Welsh-kin,—oftener still,
With semblance sly of patriotism, to gull
His soft-brain'd Saxons,—'gainst our Danish Host,
Us whom they call, in hate superlative,
The "Loathed Ones"!—But to his heart it sticks
And will not be flung off, good serpent-leech!
That draws him pale, and for the blood pours in
As much slow poison—

ELLISIF. Psha!—Where sits he now?
I have been long a stranger to this land.

BRUERN. Two rivers' length off, at King's Town on
Thames:

So prate our monks, boasting how he, great buzzard!
Airs him upon the monarch-making Rock
Of Coronation call'd, most eagle-like,
Which none, except of the right golden brood,
Should come shot-near, unslain, were I at hand!

ELLISIF. And my bird-royal stretch'd beneath yon
stone!—

Come on, come on, tell me that tale again,
His death's sad story; I would have my heart
Swim ever in the gall of bitterest tears:
Come with thy drowning-voice, as when his waves
Humber roll'd o'er thee, and thy struggling throat
Disgorged the flood with deep groans, sobs, and sighs,
Faint mockery of the horrid gurgle round thee:
Again I say, murmur it to mine ear,
Ring me his watery kneil!

BRUERN. Hark!—

ELLISIF. What?

BRUERN. Heard'st nothing?—

ELLISIF. Nought but the wind-swept grass upon the
green

Mix its soft waves in sighs.

BRUERN. Fear hath fine ears:

I must to sanctuary! [*Exit into the church.*]

ELLISIF. Get thee gone.

Ha?—No!—Yea, 'tis the regal trump that sounds,
 Baffling the night breeze with its stronger breath,
 And now bursts clear above it. [*A claron without.*]

Ethelstan!

What brings the flickering bat by night to nestle
 Amidst these hooded crows of the monastery?
 Near our white dove-cote too?—His Abbess-Sister!
 Whom the frail bond of a common bastardy
 Holds close unto his heart! Is there none else
 Who draws him hither with a silkener tie,
 Yet far more strong?—Yea, strong enough to shackle him,
 If she can wind it round him cunningly,—
 Insensibly!—for the cables he feels on him
 Are cobwebs to his strength, they burst about him
 As frozen spray doth off the whale aroused,
 While with a lash he looses him!—Let me think:
 Hum—to work safe, the how, the who, the when?—
 That gaol-bird in the Choir has but one tune,
 Murder, still Murder; every churl's redress
 For every wrong,—plain knocking on the head,—
 Last reason of your clowns as well as kings.
 No! death is but fit fate for beasts and boors
 Who harm us; Ethelstan despises that;
 He must pay bitterer penalties,—the bitterest,
 To serve the inflicter!—I'm no dagger'd ruffianess,
 Blind-staring at one visionary breast,
 Nor glancing at the Avenger who, as fell,
 Strides after her with an axe!—He shall obtain
 His death—when he hath earn'd it: then perchance
 My lord's bluff vassal may strike in!—I need
 Forwarders now far nobler than this man
 Of but one virtue—blind fidelity!
 I've sounded the smooth Prior—there's some depth;—
 Thane Alger too, my father's secret friend,
 Ethelstan's closer foe;—perchance young Edmund?
 A good soft clay!—This king hath one besides,
 Whose white arm o'er him pours his rainbow wine,
 And on her harp, the golden loom of song,
 Weaves him the tissewy rhyme: will she be with us?
 If still herself, his Bond-Maiden scarce loves him:
 No! no! there is an inner ball of fire
 Gleams from the darkness of her eye, by times
 When she looks on him, that has lightning in it!
 Yet is she wilful, and wild temperatures

Are warm in gratitude for good bestow'd,
 (He's kind to Song !) as in their ire for ill :
 Let it be so—'tis somewhat at the worst :
 And then the Dane beside, and wily Scot—
 Ay, it will do—it must !—But here's a stumble—
 No matter !—My brain too is at the loom,
 And crossing webs grow ravell'd—I'll to cell,
 And there dispose them right : dark thoughts are seen
 Best in the dark !—Sweet Lady Moon, I pray,
 Whose brightness now walks down the chapel'd aisle,
 Kiss my lord's tomb for me !—Edwin, my mission ! [*Exit.*]

Scene II.

*Ante-room in St. John's Monastery. House-carls of the
 Body-guard.*

Enter EDGITHA.

EDGITHA. Where is the king, good friend ?

House-carl.

Madam, disarming

EDGITHA. Tell him I wait.—

[*Exit House-carl.*]

Uncall'd for am I here,

But not unwish'd for, as my own heart tells me,
 Which ever beat with his when we as children
 Sat breast to breast ; and now must his like mine
 Leap to this meeting. My dame nurse would tell
 How when we lay, cherry-close, in the cradle,
 Our arms around each other's neck, we smiled
 Always together ; and when one did cry
 The other wept in ignorant sympathy,
 Having no cause but its companion's pain,
 Which 'twould console with all its art, by kisses,
 And babyish surrender of its toys
 Into the other's bosom to possess them
 Until it smiled again !

House-carl (re-entering). Madam, this way. [*Exeunt.*]

Scene changes to a small Cabinet.

ETHELSTAN *in sackcloth, at an oaken table.*

Enter EDGITHA.

ETHELSTAN. My sister ! my born friend !

[*Embracing her.*]

Why at this hour,

When none save Night's rough minions venture forth,
Was thy pale health so bold?

EDGITHA. Is there no flush
Bespreads my cheek?—that's health! new life, my brother:
Which joy to see thee brings. But out, alas!
What change in thee, what mournful change?

ETHELSTAN. Years! years!

EDGITHA. Nay thou'rt, if not in bloomiest youth's
springtide,
Yet in its autumn.

ETHELSTAN. Autumn is ever sere!
Youth saddens near its ending, like Old Age;—
Or worse,—for this hath better life at hand.

EDGITHA. No! no! that is not it—that is not it!

ETHELSTAN. And then bethink thee, Sihtric's widow-
queen,

Kings wear not, like the peacocks, feather crowns;
Our goldenest have some iron in them too!

EDGITHA. Ah! wouldst thou take meek sample from so
many

Of our wise Saxon kings; who gave up power
Without a sigh to those who still sigh'd for it;
And changed their glittering robes with russet weeds,
And turn'd their sceptres into crucifixes,
And bared their heads of all but tonsured crowns,
And lived out hermit lives in mossy cells,
Or died at Rome on saintly pilgrimage:
Were they not wise?

ETHELSTAN. Wise for themselves they were!

EDGITHA. Then wherefore not thou for thyself as well?
Wherefore, in thy loved town of Beverley,
Under thy patron saint, canonized John,
As servant dedicate through him to heaven,
Seek not thy temporal rest and peace eterne?
Wherefore withdraw not from the thorny ways
And unreclaimable wilderness of this world,
To the smooth-marbled aisle and cloister trim
Beside us; to these gardens, paced by forms
Bland-whispering as their trees, and moving round
Each shrub they tend, softly as its own shadow?
Wherefore retire thee not, wouldst thou enjoy
Calm raptures of ecstatic contemplation,
To yon elm-pillar'd avenue, sky roof'd,
That leads from Minster Church to Monastery,

Both by thyself embeautified, as if
But for thyself? Nothing disturbeth there
Save the grand hum of the organ heard within,
Or murmuring chorus that with faint low chime
Tremble to lift their voices up o'er-high
Even in God's praises?—Here find happiness,
Here make thy quietary! as thy Sister
Once queen, hath done. Wherefore not, thou and she,
Abbot and Abbess, side by side, return
To old companionship of innocence,
Our hearts re-purified at the altar's flame;
And thus let second childhood lead us, lovingly
As did the first, adown life's gentle slope,
To our unrocking cradle—one same grave?

ETHELSTAN. I could, even now, sleep to the lullaby
Sung by Death's gossip, that assiduous crone,
Who hushes all our race!—if one hope fail,
One single, life-endearing hope—

EDGITHA. Dear brother,
Take hope from my content!—though pale this brow,
'Tis calm as if she smiled on it, yon Prioress
Of Heaven's pure Nunnery, whose placid cheer
O'erlooks the world beneath her; this wren's voice
Though weak, preserveth lightsome tone and tenor,
Ne'er sick with joy like the still-hiccuping swallow's,
Ne'er like the nightingale's with grief. Believe me
Seclusion is the blessedest estate
Life owns; wouldst be among the blest on earth,
Hie thither!

ETHELSTAN. Ay—and what are my poor Saxons
To do without their king?—

EDGITHA. Have they not thanes
And chiefs?—

ETHELSTAN. Without their father? their defender?
Now specially when rumours of the Dane
Borne hither by each chill Norwegian wind,
Like evening thunder creeps along the ocean
With many a mutter'd threat of morrow dire?
No! no! I must not now desert my Saxons,
Who ne'er deserted me!

EDGITHA. Is there none else
To king it?

ETHELSTAN. None save the Etheling should; he cannot:
Childe Edmund is o'er-green in wit; though premature

In that too for his years, and grown by exercise
 Of arms, and practice of all manlike feats,—
 Which his bent towards them makes continual,
 As young hawks love to use their beaks and wings
 In coursing sparrows ere let loose at herons,—
 Grown his full pitch of stature. Ah ! dear Sister,
 Thy choice and lot with thy life's duties chime,
 All cast for privacy. So best !—our world
 Hath need of such as thee and thy fair nuns,
 And these good fathers of the monastery,
 To teach youth, tend the poor, the sick, the sad,
 Relume the extinguish'd lights of ancient lore,
 Making each little cell a glorious lantern
 To beam forth truth o'er our benighted age,—
 With other functions high, howe'er so humble,
 Which I disparage not ! But, dearest Sister,
 Even the care of our own soul becomes
 A sin—base selfishness—when we neglect
 All care for others ; and self-love too oft
 Is the dark shape in which the Devil haunts
 Nunneries, monkeries, and most privacies,
 Where your devout recluse, devoted less
 To God than self, works for his single weal ;
 When like that God he should, true Catholic,
 Advance the universal where he may.

EDGITHA. Did Satan then haunt holy hermit Paul ?

ETHELSTAN. He haunted the Most Holy in the
 Wilderness !

But what did this meek sample for all men ?
 The good King-Shepherd ? Did he tend himself,
 Alone, I pray ? or did he tend his sheep ?
 O Sister, my great duty to my God
 Involves my duty to my neighbour-men,
 And that is, to be his vicegerent o'er them,
 Protector, saviour—no angelic Guardian,
 But yet a guardian still !

EDGITHA. Wisest and best
 Of secular men, I own thee :

ETHELSTAN. Weakest and worst !
 A fool of traitorous spies and tales of treason !
 My brother's murderer ! an unbranded Cain, -
 Who hears the ground, where'er he walks, cry out
 Vengeance !—You see this penitential garb,
 Yet call me best of men ?

EDGITHA. It has been worn
Long, long enow ! 'Tis time it were put off.
ETHELSTAN. How soon will he put off his wretched
shroud ?

O Edgitha !

EDGITHA. Pour all into my breast !
Thine is o'erflowing !

ETHELSTAN. No !—Unbosom'd pain
Is half dismiss'd. I'll keep my punisher with me.—
Press me not !—there's a way to crush the heart
And still its aching, as you bind the head
When it throbs feverish.

EDGITHA. Have care of that !
There is a way to secret suicide,
By crushing the swoln heart until you kill.
Beware !—self-death is no less sinful, given
By sorrow's point conceal'd than by the sword.

ETHELSTAN. Nay, I am jocund—let's to supper !—There !
A king shall be his own house-knight, and serve.
See what a feast ! we Saxons love good cheer !—

[*He takes from a cupboard pulse, bread, and water.*]

EDGITHA. Ah ! when he will but smile, how he can
smile !

'Tis feigning all ! this death sits on his bosom
Heavily as Night-Mara's hornèd steed :
His cares for the whole realm oppress him too :
And our book-learned Prior oft draws up
From some deep fountain a clear drop of truth,—
Great Natures are much given to melancholy.—
Thanks, hospitable brother !—fare superfluous
To me who have supp'd, but somewhat scant for thee.
Come ! here's your oaken throne.

[*She places a joint stool, and he sits.*]

I thank thee more
That thou hast, for my sake, preserved at least
These gold-bright locks, which crest them on thy brow
Most crown-like, and abroad thy shoulders flow
As rich waves spread beneath the yellowing sun.—

ETHELSTAN. Yes ! yes ! it was for thee—I had an
inkling,
Albeit recluse, thou wert right woman still,
And lov'dst a gaud or two—

EDGITHA (*smoothing his hair*). Which I was wont,
When we were boy and girl, to tress and twine

With amber threads, in our old Saxon wise,
 And sleek as I do now, till 'neath my hand
 Bright and more bright they shone as they would burn—
 ETHELSTAN. Sit down! sit down! and meddle with
 thy meal,
 Trifler!—This moment thou wouldst have me shorn
 To a bare monk. and now—Come, banquet! banquet!
 EDGITHA. Wilt thou eat none?
 ETHELSTAN. I am athirst—nought else.
 EDGITHA. After thy long, long route?
 ETHELSTAN. I am athirst!
 And have a kind of creeping fever on me,
 My throat feels close and dry—thirst. only thirst.

Scene closes.

Scene III.

*Outside St. John's Church. ELLISIF alone, listening at a
 portal.*

ELLISIF. What stays him?—how he crawls, two-footed
 reptile!—
 A step?—hark!—no!—on the blank floor a water-drop
 Loud echoes as a footfall:—Hist!—Come!—Come!—
 PRIOR (*entering from the portal*). Here is the key—you
 know our secret way—
 ELLISIF. Ay, all your secret ways!—
 PRIOR. Slip through the undercroft,—
 Down the blind passage,—move the hinge-hung stone—
 ELLISIF. Enough!—Is he gone yet?
 PRIOR. And wish'd me rest
 This moment, crossing by me.
 ELLISIF. Let him wish
 Rest to himself!—Better than his to-night
 I wish thee, Prior!—No more whispering—go!—
 PRIOR. Faith, this shrill wind and we make such a
 whispering
 In these drear nooks, as lion's flesh would crimple at!
 I shiver,—so will safe to bed and warm me!

[Exeunt severally.]

Scene IV.

*Nave of St. John's Church, and Prince Edwin's Tomb.
Night-time. BRUERN in the distance, behind a column.*

Enter ETHELSTAN from a wicket.

ETHELSTAN. Look up, faint king!—tho' like the shuddering wretch

That glares upon the corse of him he slew!—
I must go on—yea, did these hollow vaults
Groan sensitive at each step, as if I trod
Over the bosoms of expiring men
Who cursed me and so died!—Where is his tomb?
Mine eyes seem loose, and wander, yet see nought—
Or fall—fall—still to earth! Can I remember?—
What were the marks? which is it?—Pale Fear clutches me
By each wild lock, and tears me from myself!—
Oh I am all distract!—Patience!—'Twas thus,
Was it not?—Ay!—thus said the Prior, thus—
Now comes back memory, like a scarce-wish'd friend!
"Fast by the column, next but two the Tower,
Where at first bell the morning-moon will shine,
Prince Edwin sleeps"—Would I could sleep his sleep!—
"Of beach-worn stone his bed, and as thou badest,
Scoop'd like a billowy sea"—Of stone? hard stone?
Thrice comfortable couch to what I, nightly,
Take my unrest on! guilt turns to a rack
My bed of smoothest rushes! gives them thorns
To pierce and harrow me as I writhe!—Well—well:
"His pillow of marble, wrought with fringe like foam;
His eyes turn'd blindly up to heaven, as if
Closed on all hope of succour."—I sent none!
Edwin, I sent thee none!—I was more deaf
Than the stunn'd sea-rock; frothier and more frenzied
Than the white rage around it; crueller still
Than ocean that in wrath precipitate, on thee
Burst—whelming thy sad cries with careless roar!—
O tyrant! tyrant king! fiend-hearted brother!—
How deep is hell? My brain whirls as I think on't;
Darkness will swallow me ever! O that it could!
But to look up thence, and behold him pleading
With angel face wash'd silver pale by tears,
Sea-worn,—his locks yet heavy from the brine,—

Pleading my pardon—Let me not look there !
 Kindness cuts deeper, undeserved, than Hate
 Plunge at thee as she will !—What else ?—“ His eyes
 Closed on all hope of succour ; so he lay
 When he was found dead-floating to the shore,
 And so, as thou ordainedst, lies he here ! ”
 Yon length-laid statue facing heaven so calm,
 Must e'en be his. Dare I approach it nigher ?
 O God ! how pale he looks, while on his cheek
 The ghastly moonbeams glisten !—Yet he's calm ;
 His bosom heaves not with a sigh,—sure proof
 At once of grief and life !—Here stand I, miserable !
 Drench'd in the cold sweat of mine agony,
 Who, but for such sad breathings-out, might seem
 As much a stone as he !—Dead at the heart,
 A mere, mere gloss of life upon my surface,
 Where all shows smooth,—but I am dead within !
 Let me rush forward, and kneel down and beg

[*Approaching.*

Forgiveness of him who was ever kind !

Nought stays me—

[*The bell tolls one.*

Ha ! that dread bell sounds like thunder,
 Shaking the huge tower o'er me as 'twould fall,
 Did I proceed !—'Twas but that bronze recorder
 Toll'd, and the vasty silence and surprise
 Made it so loud. O bright, pure eye of Heaven,
 Wilt thou still search me out, and blazon me
 Thus, wheresoe'er in darkness I would hide ?
 Blest Moon, why smile upon a murderer ?
 He hates thy glitter on him, like a leprosy !
 It mads me, wolf-like, and I feel bedropt
 With a cold-scalding mildew !—Why, that's well,
 Thou starest at me no more !—Alas, shine forth !
 Leave me not thus to night's dark angels swaying
 Their gleamless swords about me !—

(*Kneels at the tomb.*)

I will kneel !—

O thou whose spirit hovering o'er this tomb
 Look'st down upon thy prostrate brother here,
 And see'st his penitence, and his soul's pain,
 Say with thy heart-heard voice, shall he for ever
 Shall he be unforgiven ?

ELLISIF (*from behind the tomb*). Unforgiven !

ETHELSTAN. Hell's scream within mine ears !—Con-
 science, 'tis thou

Affright'st me thus!—What fantasy is this?
Spake I so shrill, the Daughter of the Rock,
Wild Echo, should have woke with such a shriek?—
My flesh felt like a swarm of living atomies
When I did hear it!—Shall I quake at nought
More than an echo?

ELLISIF. More than an echo!

ETHELSTAN (*starting up*). Ay?

Then Ethelstan is more himself!—What art,
That mock'st my words?—Hell-born or human fiend,
Thou shalt speak for thyself! Bind not, O Darkness!
A brave man's hands, that know not where to strike!

ELLISIF. Thy sword were vain on me, fell it as bright
And swift as meteor shoots. I was the breath
Of thy lorn brother while he lived,—am now
The wan, invisible warder of his tomb!

ETHELSTAN. Too thin and wire-sharp voice hast thou
for his.

ELLISIF. The serpents of the pit, to which thou sent'st me,
Gave me that meagre voice their wrizzled throats
Utter amid the mire!

ETHELSTAN. I could not send thee
Where thy sins sank thee not.

ELLISIF. When thou didst cast
Thy brother forth to die, he was unshriven;
Unshriven, so unforgiven—as thou shalt be!

ETHELSTAN. If we repent are we not all forgiven?

ELLISIF. We are forgiven as we forgive; didst thou
Forgive thy brother?

ETHELSTAN. God is more merciful
Than man to man! O were we but forgiven
As we forgive, how few were e'er absolved!
My trust in Christ is firmer than in thee,
And he hath to the penitent promised pardon.

ELLISIF. Ay! fool thee with the hope thou'rt penitent,
Yet wear'st a lawless crown! that some few tears
Can wash the scarlet out of such a sin
As stains thy soul!—Didst thou not, when the sea
Was gurliest, and his green face pale with ire,
When the winds lash'd him till he roll'd in pain
His huge-ribb'd skeleton back, didst thou not choose
That merciless mood of his, to fling thy brother
Into his gulfy maw, which, at each yawn
Disclosing hell, had swirl'd down, not a boat,

But a great ark itself?—O then they howl'd.
Thy damning chorus from the deep abyssm—
Last-born of Cain, come hither !

ETHELSTAN. Horrible ! horrible !

ELLISIF. Ocean, thy complice blind, was far more
penitent :

His grappling surge that gather'd his poor prey.
Too small for note, beneath his ponderous bosom,
Released it, like an infant overlain,
Next morn ; and bore his innocent bedmate home
Unto its mother earth, with rude wild wail,
Raving for what his restlessness had done !

ETHELSTAN. I was not less remorseful, nor did less
The little all of recompense—too late !
He heap'd thee o'er with shells, I raised this tomb
Costliest, in thy honour.

ELLISIF. Where's my throne ?
Thou undermined'st that ! Where 's the bright form
Which clothed me like a creature of the sun ?
Thou stripped'st me of that even to these bones !
Where is the breath of joyful life which Heaven
Breathed in my nostrils ? Thou hast turn'd that, that,
Into the blue sulphureous flame I utter,
Condemn'd to burn in my own ire against thee !

ETHELSTAN. If my rash deed have made thee thus a devil
Who wast near angel, I were rightly damn'd.

ELLISIF. Thou art ! thou art !—Thy last, thy fondest hope
Of any bliss on earth, mark how I quench it :
She, whom thou lovest so, long lost, late found,
Thy queen elect, the saint thy heart enshrines,
She whom thou dream'st will, like another self,
Double thy joys, divide thy woes,—that peerless one,
Hates thee as I do !

ETHELSTAN. Ellisif ?

ELLISIF. Even she !

ETHELSTAN. My bleeding heart's sole balm to poison
turn'd !

O she's not false !—She makes me who did cause,
Howe'er unwilling, her dear father's death,
Fast from the luxury of her sight awhile,
Till, purged in penitential tears,
Mine eyes may taste of it again :—nought else !
Thou art the false one, thou much chang'd spirit,
If thou have even the substance of a shade !

ELLISIF. My speech hath touch'd thy conscience to the quick :

Take now this bloody stigma from my hand,
Proof I am no false vision !

[*A flash of moonlight—ELLISIF vanishes—BRUERN, sheathing his sword, shrinks aside.*]

ETHELSTAN.

Thy foul purpose

Dreaded the light, which scared thee too !—Thou wert,
Sure, but my superstition's child alone ?

Nor trace—nor footfall—fleeting form—nor shadow
Tells of thee !—Ha ! what church-breaker art thou ?

Come forth, assassinate shape ! [Seeing BRUERN.]

BRUERN.

I cannot :

Good pilgrim, do an outlaw'd man no harm.

ETHELSTAN. Forth, slave, I say !

BRUERN.

Ne'er trust me ! By this altar

The Chair of Safety is, to which I'm chain'd.

ETHELSTAN. Chain'd ?

BRUERN.

Ay, by fear's strong fetters ; for I bear

A wolf's head—whoso brings it in gets gold !—

Let me to sleep again.

ETHELSTAN.

Knave, it was thou

Held insolent parley with me here : confess !

BRUERN. Most like ! bytimes I babble in my sleep.

ETHELSTAN. That rheumy voice, like grating of a rope,
Could not have feign'd such piercing words.—Speak, felon !
Where's thy fine-spoken friend ?

BRUERN.

There !

ETHELSTAN.

Who ?

BRUERN.

Prince Edwin !

ETHELSTAN. Why, what art thou, that let'st thy blunt
words fall

Like stones in thick ooze dropp'd from some high tower,

When of such perilous moment they may sink

The stranded bark beneath, without thy caring ?

BRUERN. Churl Bruern I !—the Prince's man.

ETHELSTAN.

Thou scape

Great Ocean's watery ordeal, and not he ?

That chance was given him for sweet Mercy's sake ;

If innocent, I trusted saviour wings

Would hover round his barque, and fan it o'er

To some blest island, though fleet-wrecking storms

Blew in its teeth, and undulous mountains rose

Moon-high between it and its harbourage.

BRUERN. Then innocent I, as those same wings brush'd me
Back to this island blest !

ETHELSTAN. That shakes my creed :
Wherefore but thee ?

BRUERN. Long time upon the gunwale
The Prince stood,—like white-eyed Despair,—then suddenly
Leapt far into the flood with a mad shriek,
And sank : but I, more harden'd in mishaps,
Clung fast to the boat's bottom as a barnacle,
While she stuck to herself ; then on my shield,
Which oft a soldier makes his raft, I scull'd it
With an old stave, witch-like, across the deep ;
Till Providence, who protects the innocent,
Flung me, nigh shapeless, mash'd to merman spawn,
Weltering ashore.

ETHELSTAN. Why iterate to me
Thy innocence ?

BRUERN. Dread sir, I know my king.
The majesty of his sun-bright locks betray'd him,
Albeit in pilgrim weed.

ETHELSTAN. Say,—and be pardon'd
Thy treason here, in virtue of that death
Thou almost suffer'd for no treason done.—
Who was it now assail'd me by that tomb ?

BRUERN. My liege, I know not.

ETHELSTAN. Heard'st thou nought ?

BRUERN. I heard

A low voice down the aisle mumbling of beads
And paternosters, till its hum beguiled me,
As doth the drowsy purr of a Beldam's wheel
Her nodding self, to sleep.

ETHELSTAN. Nor saw'st nought ?

BRUERN. Where ?

ETHELSTAN. Here !

BRUERN. When, sire ?

ETHELSTAN. At that moonburst from the murk ?

BRUERN. Thy royal self.

ETHELSTAN. None else ?

BRUERN. I saw a screech-owl

Whirr from yon niche into the cloister near ;
None else, though so long custom'd to this gloom,
Bat-like I could chase moths, or spy out things
As dusk of coat as my half-brother mouse,
Dotting the distant floor.

ETHELSTAN. Doth maddening sorrow
 Conjure up semblances, yea, phantom sounds,
 Beyond the dread creations of a dream?
 It may be so!—'Tis held that warning voices
 Do come at times from dead mouths to quick ears,
 Which thrill as cold to hear them!—Sure, 'twas scarce
 Bold treason, too refined for this coarse worker?
 Begone! (*To BRUERN*),—and clear mine eyesight of a blot!
 Although, perchance, unguilty of this deed,
 Thou hast been aye a dark and dangerous man,
 Whose ill society suspicion cast
 On all permitting it; my thoughtless brother
 Kept too much commerce with thee, and thy like,
 Who turn to damning though dumb witnesses
 Against their friends in jeopardy.—Begone,
 Lourer! as sullen-eyed as untamed steer,
 And as strong-headed thy wild course to roam.
 Begone! I may repent my mercy too! [*Exeunt severally.*]

ACT II.

*Scene I.**A Court of St. John's Monastery.*

EDMUND ETHELING and PRINCE HACO, *throwing the spear.*

EDMUND (*throwing*). There! two good lengths beyond
 you, prince!

HACO. Scarce one!

EDMUND. Mayhap scarce one of my spear's, but full two
 Of your short pikestaff's.

HACO. O you are so proud
 Of wielding that tall ash-plant you pluck'd up!
 It fits right apt your Colbrand fist!—A spear
 For wild-swine hunters, not for warriors!

EDMUND. It will do well upon the litter then
 Farrow'd by Norway, who come routing hither
 So oft, to fat them in our acorn'd land!

HACO. I know you'll prove another Turketul!
 And, like a tower on wheels shoved into battle,
 Swaying about your windmill arms, whiff down
 Unwieldily all approachers: you bluff Saxons!

But try me at sword exercise, where skill
Makes strength—

EDMUND. Good faith, I'd give you *Gaudiosa*,
Charlemagne's famous blade, and beat you after
With a stout bulrush!—You!

HACO. Well, I'll not quarrel:
My royal foster-father strict forbids us.
Are we not brethren? The same king who calls
Me "foster-son," treats you too as his child.

EDMUND (*to himself*). I hope he will not treat me as
his brother!—

Poor Edwin! thy dark fate be-clouds my days
And keeps me aye a-chill!

HACO. I know the cause
Of all this!

EDMUND. What?

HACO. You're jealous I shall tangle
The wildbird we would both lime if we could,
With love's rich honey-dew!

EDMUND. The King's glee-maiden?
She loves a hawk's spark-throwing eye far better
Than Haco's soft-blue gaze! Ay, and would take
England's fierce falcon rather to her bosom
Than Norway's tercel-gentle!

HACO. Not yet long enough
Mew'd in your Southron court-cage, to be pluck'd at
Tamely—defend thyself? [*Draws.*]

Enter RUNILDA in huntress apparel.

RUNILDA (*muttering to herself*).

O'er the wild ganner's bath
Come the Norse coursers!—

Ha! who be ye
That sheathe your bare swords in each other's bosoms?
Well done! O well!

EDMUND. Nay, Haco is our guest,
'Twere scarce well done to make his flesh my scabbard;
I drew my brand but to protect myself.

RUNILDA. Proceed, good youths!

EDMUND. Erewhile thou wert more given,
With words as sweet as songs, to harmonise
Our jarring souls.—No! no! mermaiden never
Breathed with her dulcet voice so still a calm
Over contentious waves, as thou o'er us!

Nor billows, lull'd by murmuring summer wind,
When bees are heard in it far, far off land,
E'er fell to that smooth level so entranced.
As we did then into delighted swoon,
Thus to be quell'd by thee!

RUNILDA. 'Twill not be quell'd!—
My brain is big with it!—'twill forth, all arm'd!
Howe'er it came—since the dawn sprang—even now
A gory form, War, with his hundred wounds
And trumpet that drops blood, doth cross my sight!
Sharp-singing lances whirr athwart mine ear,
And shiver at my feet! close to mine eyes
Bright swords are clashing! Yea, as quakes deep earth
Ere Hecla burst, through every sense doth thrill
The shock of un-seen armies!—Hark! that din,
Made thick with shrieks, and groans, and battle cries—
Gladden'd with shouts victorious now—and now,
Alas! the field of blood sends up a wail
Too low to reach heaven, but spreads to my heart!—
Look! where the mangled corpses writhe and heave
With life intolerable—thousand limbs,
The woe of sense not yet shook off, lie weltering
Like seaweeds at red sunset, up and down!—
O Glory, thou stand'st nearest to the skies
As doth the pine, brushing them with thy plumes,
But earliest art struck prostrate!—Therefore I say,
Well done, sweet youths!—Come North and South together
At once, if we must e'en have storm. Fight on
Stout Edmund and keen Haco!

HACO. Saw you her ever
So moved before as this?

EDMUND. Never! nor heard
Her reedy voice utter such mournful sounds
Even at her fitfullest times. Some one hath touch'd
The master-spring of passion in her breast
With hand too violent. What would she mean?

RUNILDA. Heard you not that prophetic snatch I sung?—

O'er the wild gannet's bath
Come the Norse coursers!

What would she mean? I tell thee, Edmund Etheling,
A thundercloud hangs o'er thee, ripe to burst!—
My brain sounds like an armourer's forge, klang! klang!
You Saxon War-smiths are at work! ye shape

THOR's iron marriage-rings for coats of mail,
 Bend helms, and on the anvil turn the blade,
 Hardening it !—Haco, I tell thee, mine ear
 Is full of far-borne echoes, like the shell
 That thrills with dread intelligence from the main !—
 Ay, scout my warnings, call me rapture-mad !
 So do the world's wise fools by all our tribe,
 And yet, great Heaven, what truths we've sung !—No
 matter !

What need my little maidhood care ? I'm safe
 As in a star, roll earth which way it please !—
 Still round her, with art-magical of song,
 Her sanctuary circle draws, unseen,
 The blithe Glee-maiden, pure enchantress true !
 Still winds she on from fairy ring to ring
 Transgress'd by no bold foot, the Minstrel Girl !
 Throughout song-loving Saxon land securest,
 Yea among camps, and courts more dangerous—

Enter a House-carl.

EDMUND. Captain, what now ?
House-carl. The king is ill at ease,
 And seeks his custom'd music.

RUNILDA. I'll not go !
House-carl (advancing). Nay, mistress, but his grace
 must be amused.

RUNILDA (*drawing a dirk*). Off, churl !—Stain royalty
 with thy slave's touch ?—
 Am I not Queen of the Minstrels' sacred quire ?
 Back, or I'll nail thy breastplate on !

HACO (*to EDMUND*). O proudness !
 Her spirit guards her better than her spells :
 See how her ire-bright eye answers her steel
 Fierce flash for flash, blackness as keenly blazing
 As brilliant ore itself !

EDMUND (*to him*). It is a picture !
 Now sails she to and fro a swan before him,
 Looking disdain ascaunce on the poor hound
 That dared bark at her !

HACO (*to RUNILDA*). Lady, 'twere more wise
 You did attend the king ; his natural mood
 Is gentleness, which sorrow hath made gentler ;
 But stir him not, O wake not for thy soul
 The anger of a gentle-hearted man !

'Tis like the summer-thunder, fearfullest,
Because from heaven's perturbed calm forced out.

RUNILDA. I muse ! I muse !—let me alone !

EDMUND. Thou art
Fortune's spoilt pet and his ; a dove that still
Pecks at the hand she sits on.

RUNILDA. Fortune's forsooth !
His too ? —I thank him !—Well, the sphere rolls round,
And its fires with it !—some of them may strike —

O'er the wild gannet's bath (Chanting.
Come the Norse coursers !

EDMUND. I do beseech you, dareful maider, go !

RUNILDA. Not a snail's step !—It is no time. Believe me,
For lullabies to babies young or old !

EDMUND. Let me plead thy own cause with thy stern
self :

Bring not disfavour's blast on thee by waywardness
So blind ; but docile, tend as thou wert wont
The king's repose.

RUNILDA (*underbreath*). And be a Judith to him,
When I have charm'd to sleep !—(*Aloud*) Let me begone.

HACO. Where, Maiden ?

RUNILDA. With thane Alger's wife a-falcoming !
She bid me thither : I am to ride black Merlin,
That rasps the hard flint-road with sparkling hoof,
But through the woodland springs, a very deer,
High as the boughs !

EDMUND. This is all obdurate talk ;
She will not go.

Enter PRINCE FERGUS.

She will not go, Prince Fergus !
We are desperate of her.

FERGUS. Lo ! how my bird-call here
Will lure the wild one down. [*Touching a harp.*

RUNILDA. My harp ! my harp !
Come to me, bosom friend !—My fingers glow
To grapple thee, and with their fiery touch
Kindle thy glittering strings !—

FERGUS. Wilt follow me !

RUNILDA. Anywhere !—take me !—take me !—

O'er the wild gannet's bath—

[*Exit chanting, led by* FERGUS.

HACO.

Womanhood !—

That bends no jot to reason, interest, power,—
But yields her for a toy!—That lustrous harp
Made her brow shine, as eagles' eyes grow yellow
At the engolden'd sun !

EDMUND.

What witchery dwells

About this little Bardess, that she makes
Her very faults seem loveable, and her masters
With strange art keeps her slaves?—Ah ! sceptred Beauty,
Queen even of kings, and Conqueress ! but not yet
Imperial quite, until the heaven-diopp'd orb
Of genius crown thee !—then, omnipotent !

[*Exeunt.*]*Scene II.**The King's Cabinet.*ETHELSTAN *on a Couch.* Enter FERGUS and RUNILDA.

ETHELSTAN. O !—come at last, my fair perversity ?
Sit ye down here : I know your tribe's free nature,
Less ruly than the wind-sway'd sea, obeys
The changeful moon alone. Sit down, prince Fergus.—
Now, a soul-soothing strain, that may hum by me
As runnel sweet by slumbrous shepherd's ear.—
What is this for ? why dost thou clash the strings,
Tearing, so falcon-like, as 'twere a victim,
Thy loved harp's breast ? Fie ! fie ! a gentler passion !
RUNILDA. It comes !—it comes !—but like the hill-
flood's roar,

When earth-shook pinnacles their sheeted rocks
Roll in confounding unison, that makes
The faint stars echo—when hoarse ocean chimes—
When tempest-slanted forests turn their leaves
To whistles shrill—and innocent birds attune
Their shrieks to vultures' screams—when beasts untameable
Stand bellowing for bare fear—when heaven itself
Is one loud forge of flashing bolts, and cave
Rifted with ever-bursting thunders.—Nay,
Waft it not from thee thus !—'twill come !—but soon
Be soft enough, as death's last, groanless sigh,
The strength of agony spent—

ETHELSTAN.

What dreadful cliff

Hath turn'd her brain ? what whirlwind hath enrapt her,
That she's so giddy-headed ?

FERGUS. Now, sir, she's still.
Fix'd as a wild-way cross, and looks as bleak!—

ETHELSTAN. Good!—there's a spreading lie upon her face

That whitens to a smile. Dreamer, awake!

RUNILDA. With my lark's throat I warble forth my glee!
With my lark's glance far, far a-field I see!

Look ocean-ward!—Said I not true!—They come!

Look! look! look! look! [*Breaking into a march.*]

O'er the wild gannet's bath
Come the Norse coursers!
O'er the whale's heritance
Gloriously steering!
With beaked heads peering,
Deep-plunging, high-rearing
Tossing their foam abroad,
Shaking white manes aloft,
Creamy-neck'd, pitchy-ribb'd,
Steeds of the Ocean!

O'er the Sun's mirror green
Come the Norse coursers!
Trampling its glassy breadth
Into bright fragments!
Hollow-back'd, huge-bosom'd,
Fraught with mail'd riders,
Clanging with hauberks,
Shield, spear, and battleaxe,
Canvas-wing'd, cable-rein'd,
Steeds of the Ocean!

O'er the Wind's ploughing-field
Come the Norse coursers!
By a hundred each ridden,
To the bloody feast bidden,
They rush in their fierceness
And ravine all round them!
Their shoulders enriching
With fleecy-light plunder,
Fire-spreading, foe-spurning,
Steeds of the Ocean!—

ETHELSTAN. Still this wild barding?

RUNILDA. 'Tis as true and wise
As that we write on rocks to last for ages,
Channeling our dark lore in mystic Runes.

There! See you there? is that no cloud aloft?

ETHELSTAN. Yea, black as Night's breath.

RUNILDA. 'Tis a cloud of ravens,
That croak of slaughter, echoing Rumour's knell!

ETHELSTAN. The blackness travels north; here is
bright sun;

What say you now, ill-boding bird?

RUNILDA. O blindness!

See you what sanguine streaks do scar that sun,
Portending crimson times? Last night, remember thee,
What did thine eyes behold? As thou rodest hither
Were not the Northern Streamers blood-red flames?
Glanced not the mountain-rills beneath the moon
As if 'twere blood they ran with?—did they not, King?

ETHELSTAN. Thy own mind's eye is bloodshot.

RUNILDA. He's unsavable!

Death's film is drawn already o'er his eye,
He cannot see his tomb-ward steps!—I've done!—
Towards him my duty's o'er!

ETHELSTAN. Lead her away:

Her mind's distemperature hath infected me:

Take her, prince Fergus.

RUNILDA. Fergus, fair-hair'd Fergus!

Do not thou stop thine ears and seal thine eyes;

Death's arrows fill the air—to house! to house!

Go you not forth—the God of Battle grim

Gapes with sepulchral mouth to swallow thee!

Go you not forth, young Fergus—'tis to die!

FERGUS. Well, well, with thee to chant my coronach,
Immortal maker! I shall be content.

RUNILDA (*chanting*).

O woe! for the fair-hair'd son of the Gael!

Red, red is his royal blood,

That fresh from his heart, O woe and wail!

Lies under him in a flood!

FERGUS. Come, come, the King looks at us.

[*Exit, leading* RUNILDA.

ETHELSTAN.

I know well

What spawn foul ocean genders!—Ran her brain

Less on such perilous themes—war, spoil, invasion,

I'd say she had some knowledge, of a truth,

The fry had grown to monsters.—Fate works strangely!

Well must it work for me, however ill,

As I am at the worst! But one frail reed

Hangs o'er the brink of that deep gulf beneath me,

Break this, and I fall in!—The proof is nigh.

[*Exit.*

*Scene III.**A Cell.*

ELLISIF.

ELLISIF. He was much shaken ; but stands firmly yet,
 Like a half-ruin'd tower : my enginery
 Hath struck him once, and on the crossbow groove
 Another crag sits waiting to be hurl'd,
 Another and another still at hand :
 O ! he should boast, if rocks could bury him
 Heap'd at my bidding, a gigantic cairn !
 My wrath sublime would raise such monument
 To both, as should out-dure and over-peer
 The sky-aspiring hills.—Guilt and Avengement
 Should rest entomb'd together ; prostrate he
 Beneath, she tiptoe on the pinnacle,
 Like Victory that crowns herself !—Fool Ethelstan
 Would have them kiss, and couch together, alive :—
 Sooner I'd couch me in a sulphurous bed
 And couple with the dragon.—But my suitor
 Must now be seen—I am prepared !—I've sown
 A whirlwind for his reaping ; Edmund hath caught
 The white plague—fear !—that's ever a sore sting,
 Suspicion undeserved from those we love.
 Then I have wrought with my young Bower-Maiden ;
 Which will prove bitter too ; let the fond rhapsodist
 Rave of the clouded ills which beetle o'er us,
 'Tis but the wildwood lyre by zephyrs rung,
 Wailing perplexedly its airy woes,
 Smiled at though pitied !—She was lured at once ;
 Trivial confidings win great confidence,
 When with vague whispers swoln, they seem too big
 For the awe-shrunk ear—

My summoner !

Enter a Nun.

NUN. Our sovran-abbess in the speaking room
 Attendeth Maiden Ellisif.

ELLISIF. She comes— [Exit Nun.
 “ Our sovran-abbess,” who, as simple as faith,
 As credulous as hope, as blind as love,
 Thinks what is done with a fair front is fair !

A good face that, froze into one still smile,
 For greeting all the world !—a good set face !
 Grief hath not graven mine yet deep enough,
 But opening back my braids thus,—and 'tis smoothable :
 No better mask than chill unchangingness ;
 Ethelstan, wise, judicial Ethelstan,
 He shall my centred soul guess from my surface
 As gaping sages do the moon's true nature
 From her snow-bright apparency !—Than depth
 Surface much more unfathomable is,
 Whene'er impenetrable ! Am not I
 Woman ? And was not art her nature ever ? [Exit.]

Scene IV.

The Convent Parlour.

EDGITHA. *Enter ELLISIF.*

EDGITHA. Welcome, fair Daughter !

ELLISIF. Like salute to thee,

Fair Mother of our flock ?

EDGITHA. Thou art not yet

One of it ; nor perchance wilt ever be.

ELLISIF. My year novicial has to run ; meantime

The age is awful in strange accidents !

EDGITHA. Nothing so strange for Maiden Ellisif,

So fresh in youth, so flourishing in beauty,
 High-fated from her birth, to mount a throne.

The King comes hither presently ; no longer
 Will he be blush'd off.

ELLISIF (*aside*). Blush'd off !—Ah, good lady !

Talks to me as to some rose-modest lass,
 Whose heart is in her cheeks !—(*Aloud*) Madam, I'm here
 Pale, but untrembling.

EDGITHA. Well, if marriages

Must be, they're best when cool-consider'd—Hark you

That hasty trump ? [Flourish without.]

I leave you :—(*Aside*) Wondrous calm !

[Exit.]

ELLISIF. He comes, like one condemn'd, with claspèd
 hands,

But faster to his fate !—How my proud heart
 Grows large within me, as the lioness swells

Her ireful bosom to meet him that slew
Her forest lord!—Patience, thy vizard yet!

Enter ETHELSTAN.

ETHELSTAN. Dread Spirit! thou wert a truth then?—

She does hate me!

Her father's grave is still a gulf between us
Unpassable; I, a wretched darkler here,
See her, blest angel, on the other side
Glittering in beauty's light!—Fix'd as a statue?
I will beseech her; icicles themselves
Melt at warm sighs, shall not this snowy creature?
O lady! look'st thou at the heavens to call
Some wandering meteor down with sing'd hair
To wrap me in its fires?

ELLISIF.

My noblest father!

Heaven's errant thunder lighted upon thee,
Albeit babe-innocent of treason foul.

ETHELSTAN. Was the fault mine?—My heart was aye
the fount

Of mercy more than justice!—Death, swift death
Had been awarded Alfred thane, known partner
With the doom'd Edwin; scaffold palls were hung;
The sharp axe glisten'd in thy father's eye,
But 'tween the block and him Persuasion knelt
In Pity's plight of outspread arms and tears,
Which saved him.

ELLISIF.

I wept not!

ETHELSTAN.

Thy image did,

Thy secret self, closeted in my bosom!
Therefore though my whole Mote of Wisemen oped
One mouth against him, I did send thy father
To clear himself at Peter's Roman chair
By oath; his soul was on it, and ne'er came
Back from Heaven's bar.

ELLISIF.

Yea, for good men will die

No less than ill, and oftener at their prayers!

ETHELSTAN. Then, gentle Ellisif, he might have died
Had he been state-absolved, and sent to offer
Thanksgiving here at Beverley,—might have died
In any act or hour: 'twas not a judgment,
Haply, fell on him, but that chance which lets
The sinner sink to hell in bed of roses,

The sainted rise to heaven from rack or pyre !—
Where was my guilt ?

ELLISIF. I cannot 'stablish it :
Thou dost plead speciously.

ETHELSTAN. Truth pleads in me,
And Love, who makes the breath glow, which thou see'st
Burn round my lips, as round the earnest steed's
His soul for victory flaming !—Have long years
Spent in the learned Western Isle religious,
Left thee untaught—Forgetfulness is virtue
When, howso deep, Offence is undesign'd ?
Hath Solitude, which, for companionship,
Brings back our former selves, never recall'd
Thy vow, love-sweet, to me—long times ago ?
Vow unredeem'd, on natural excuse
Of thy dear father's death ; by me unclaim'd
Then, while endured my penance for a deed
Which makes the Valley of the Shadow of Death
Still darker to my view—Edwin's sad fate !

ELLISIF (*aside*). Well wept, crocodile !—thou wept'st, to
lure him

Into thy clutches, weep'st to lure me now !
This water of the brain how flush it is
In your great-headed hypocrites, but fatal
Unto their dupes !—Stay ; his soft, drunken eyes
Grow dry again.

ETHELSTAN. I am not given to tears.

ELLISIF. Some weaknesses from strong affections spring ;
They are too warm, and make too soft the heart.

ETHELSTAN. It is a gracious sentence !—I have loved
Too well for mine own peace. Yet I'll love on,
Even those who cause me anguish : 'tis not, lady,
Our enemies wound us inliest, but ever
Our dear, domestic friends ! who take us sleeping,
Suspicionless—our pillow on their lap,
And plant it thick with thorns ! If not themselves,
Their demons do it, who of their follies, faults,
Misfortunes, sow the pointed crop, which strikes
Into the quick of feeling, while our foes
With their most fiend-like shafts but pierce its shell.

ELLISIF. 'Tis a sad lesson !

ETHELSTAN. Ay, to be learn'd by heart !
Could Anlaf make me weep ? Edwin hath done it !
The Dane, my direst foe ; he, my loved brother !—

O maiden, thou couldst never count the tears
 Of blood he costs me ; but I swallow them !
 And now five rueful winters, twelve months each,
 Warrant a gentle spring, the annual dawn
 Of summer's holiday to life-long sorrow :
 Make it so, or I perish at the heart,
 Even at my timeliest hour of flourishing ;
 Ah ! let the bright-eyed deity in thy looks
 Shine on me, and revive !

ELLISIF. Thou see'st me here,
 Firm to perform all deep vows I have sworn
 Long since, and daily. I withdrew, self-banish'd,
 To mourn my orphan-hood, and save thy soul
 Threaten'd, between thy passionate flame and vow
 Of penitence, with distraction, or destruction.

ETHELSTAN. O kindness in unkindness ! faith in faith-
 lessness !—

Well, well, I am content !—My life clears up
 Brighter at last, like to a rainbow eve,
 In this departing shower !—So, it is gone !—
 Henceforth I may be happy ! Upon thee,
 My comforter, my counsellor, is all
 Ethelstan's human trust ! thou, thou my second
 But chiefest self, first in my love and pride,
 For thy head wears bright Wisdom's crown, while mine
 Scarce fills what many a royal fool hath worn,
 The poor crown politic.

ELLISIF. Flatter me not, but let me
 Try all my skill of comfort and of counsel,
 Study the craft of state, and from thee learn
 Its secrets to promote them : I'm no girl
 That loves but dress, dance, sempstery, and song !—
 Yet, as do Saxons all, doth Maiden Ellisif
 Honour the harp, and hath some gift in glee—

ETHELSTAN. Then shalt thou the sweet exercise pursue
 And bring me happy dreams ! My Harper-Girl
 Of late is somewhat o'er-inspired—is mad
 Even above minstrel measure. Here, my signet !
 'Twill make thee free, as my betrothed wife,
 Of bower and cabinet : Come oft, stay long !
 Till marriage make us individual.
 Now dearest queen ! tell me, and be my aid
 At once, as if thou wert my helpmate sworn,
 Didst thou hear aught, or guess, while in Ibernian,

Of Anlaf and his host? That is a care
Which delves a furrow in my brow, each time
I think of it.

ELLISIF (*aside*). And soon shall harrow thy heart!—
(*To him.*) They are unquiet ever in that Isle,
But though King Anlaf threaten much, methought
His preparations had his kingdom there,
New-found yet scarce well-founded, more in prospect,
Than that one he lost here—

ETHELSTAN. Northumbria!
Northumbria is in his eye and heart!

ELLISIF. I'll give my liege good reasons, to relieve him
From that oppressive care—

ETHELSTAN. Then, as we walk—
[*Exeunt discoursing.*]

ACT III.

Scene I.

The Royal Bower.

ETHELSTAN *on his couch asleep*: ELLISIF *seated by the couch, thrums over a harp monotonously. An Attendant.*

ELLISIF (*ceasing to play*). Both are entranced: well done!—

(*Softly to the Attendant.*) Repose thee, go!
Drowsiness with his beetle wings hath humm'd
Thy lullaby too: retire!—She nods!—Dost hear me?—
Go rest thee till I call, i' the outer chamber:
Tread soft—wake not his grace—close the door easily,—
As 'twere upon the dead!

[*Exit Attendant.* ELLISIF *makes fast the bolt, and lets down the door-tapestry.*

So, 'tis well done!
He sleeps!—My witching harp hath o'er him weft
Slumber's soft web, and in its airy mesh
His strength is ta'en as in an iron toil!
There lies he powerless, as on some lone strand
A youth by mermaid's murmurous song enswoon'd,
Fool of her fatal shell!—What joy to view him
Laid out for slaughter thus—thus at my mercy—
Him, slayer of my husband and my father,—

Him, who trod down their glory into dust,
Now spurnable as a corpse beneath my feet !—
(*Drawing a dagger.*) This tempter clings to me—'twill
scarce be sheathed !—

No ! I'll not slay him ; he shall live to crouch,
Footstool of my ambition !—Sleep, sleep on,
But not to rest ! I've caught from thy bird-maiden
A secret note of thee, which used with craft,
Shall bring thee sleep thou'dst well exchange for wakefulness
As dry-eyed as the sun's !—Lend me once more,
Presence of my dead lord ! thy sorrowful voice
To thrill his soul with ! that faint voice thy grave
Yawns forth by night, and with the moaning winds
Mingles spiritual !—Now, better skill'd,
Let me assay it. (*Goes behind the couch, and whispers
plaintively into the King's ear.*)
Sleep'st thou, unkind brother ?

O canst thou sleep, nor think'st of Edwin torn
Piecemeal by these wild horses of the sea !

ETHELSTAN (*dreaming, starts to his elbow*). Ha !—here
again ? how can I save thee now ?—

Art not a corse ?

ELLISIF. Lo ! where the grim birds follow me !
And gore my tender flesh—feast on my heart—
The bleeding heart that loved thee, Ethelstan !

ETHELSTAN (*rising*). Avaunt, foul raveners !—Where
are my bow-men ?—

Off cormorants !—fly all my hawks at them !—
Stanch his deep wounds !—cover his bosom up !
Let me not see it bleed !

ELLISIF (*following him*). Hark how the blast
Shrieks in mine ear !—the bitter-seething spray
Wraps its cold shroud around me !

ETHELSTAN. Still his eyes
Turn their dull balls this way !—they pierce me through
Into my heart's heart !

ELLISIF. Ethelstan, O cruel !
Help me !—take off these writhing serpents here
That strangle me in their weedy coils !—Now ! now !
They pull me to the bottom !—Help, help, Ethelstan !
O I am lost !

ETHELSTAN. Save him ! a boat there ! save him !
Let me plunge for him, cowards !—Edwin ! thy hand !
Strain up to me !—My crown to him who saves thee !

ELLISIF. Gone !—sunk !—for ever !—Cruel, cruel king !
 O thou shalt drown in hell's sulphureous sea
 Of fathomless fire for this !

ETHELSTAN (*falling on his knees*). Mercy ! O mercy !

ELLISIF. Deliver then thy fatal signet up :
 Say—Where is that curst instrument which seal'd
 The warrant for my death ?

ETHELSTAN. There ! in the casket !
 Under my pillow.

ELLISIF. Give me, that I may fling it
 Down to the infernal stithy where 'twas forged !

ETHELSTAN. Take it ! the touch doth scorch—
*(He opens a casket, and gives out a signet ; she stamps
 a parchment with it, replaces it, and the casket also.)*

Now, am I saved ?

Is there a hope?—Speak ! Speak !—He answers not !—
 O God, still unforgiven !

ELLISIF. Unforgiven !

ETHELSTAN (*awaking*). Despair !

ELLISIF. My dearest liege, what hath so stirr'd you?
 Why move you from your couch ? Lie down, lie down,
 And sleep as calm again.

ETHELSTAN. Calm ! I could sleep
 On bed of fieriest martyrdom after this !
 O, I have seen such things, and heard !—my blood
 Is ice, my brain is fire !—Tell me, dear wife,
 Where have I been ?

ELLISIF. Why here, upon your couch !

ETHELSTAN. Wherefore didst not awake me ?

ELLISIF. So I did :

When just now, suddenly, with heaving breast,
 Thou didst begin to mutter some wild words,
 And started up—I thought 'twas well to wake thee !

ETHELSTAN. Thanks, tenderest love !—It seem'd an
 age of pain,

And pain the soul might burst with !—I will tell it thee ;
 Let us away ; some demon haunts this room !

The air is breathless—let us away, sweet queen !

Thou shalt console—shalt know all !—But for thee

Anguish had turn'd me wild !—Thanks ! thanks ! thanks
 ever !

[*Exeunt.*]

*Scene II.**An Orchard.*

FERGUS and RUNILDA.

FERGUS. Wilt thou forsake the bower that shelters thee?
Where beauty's lip chirps love, sweet bird! to thee?
Where a king's gorgeous hand caresses thee?
Where kneeling chiefs serve up rich food for thee?
Wilt thou unto the moory wealds, and hills
Barren of berries even, reckless begone?
Where the broad-winnowing kite, poised but to swoop,
Soars with wide survey and earth-fixed eye;
Where foxes prowl, and catamountains spring
Like creatures of the pinion on their prey?
Bethink thee, beauteous songstress! O, bethink thee,
Within these wildering woods, all over Isle,
No covert safe but this for bird so rare!

RUNILDA. It shall not be my cage, though it be golden!
What! mew me here, who should, by right of song,
Range the Isle round, like ocean's margin-wave,
Pouring a tide of melody on each strand?
Coop with these tame fowl, yet not of their kin?
Let my brave plumage rather be pluck'd off,
And cut away my crest!—Why should I stay?
My place is given another! Maiden Ellisif
Is the king's Glee-maid now, and hath stole from me
The chaplet of my fame!—I will not stay!
He calls me—mad—too!—I'll not stay an hour!

FERGUS. Whither wilt thou betake thee, homeless child?

RUNILDA. Hist! hist!—but for our two lives tell it not!—
I know a mossy nook the sun-bred winds
Visit on wing, like swallows when they cheer
Their nestlings with sweet play; it is as warm
As Love's breath makes his harbour: from that promontory
Where Humber writhes his serpent head to sea,
This cave looks forth; and o'er the broadening ooze,
Its chalky brows, that gleam against the sun,
Beacon the wanderers of the elements
Thither for refuge. Thitherward my comrades
Are flocking now on salt-wet wing:—They're safe!
I see them over-swarm the cliff's bleak head
Despite all bluster from the land!

FERGUS.

Thy comrades !

Who, under heaven ?

RUNILDA.

The brood of that proud Raven
Under whose hovering darkness is ! whose pinion
Flaps like a pall, dark standard of old Death !—
With them the long-wing'd Seamews troop, spray-speckled,
That midland come, prowling the river-banks.
Sharp famine in their cry, when Southward driven.

FERGUS. I guess thy meaning ; but art sure of this ?
Art sure thy friends be there to aid thee ?

RUNILDA.

Sure !

As of one here, to aid me unto them :
Thou must hie with me ! Fearless for myself
Weapon'd as I shall be with harp and skene,
'Tis for thy sake alone thou must come with me.
Destruction hangs o'er this king's head, and thine,
Flee him and it together !

FERGUS.

Being a hostage

So trusted by this unsuspecting king,
With license large to range as forest deer,
How can I break my promise, understood
Though never ask'd nor given, not to flee ?
How stain my princely honour so ?

RUNILDA.

Then break

Thy promise unto me thou would'st be mine
Ever and everywhere ! Stain thy pure honour
Thus—to a princess, not to a baseborn king !

FERGUS. Sibyl, thy words are spells !

RUNILDA.

Listen again :

Thou hast my dearest secret, why not this ?
The fox of kings, the lion-fox, is with us,
Wagging his bush for prey ; wilt thou not come
To shield red-grizzled Constantine ? Unfilial !
What ties thee here ? As Ethelstan bereft
Unrightfully thy father of his crown,
Bereave him of the pledge he took for it,—
Thyself ; that is true nature's equity,
As our wild laws deliver it—wrong for wrong !
Little doth Herva, in Runilda's guise,
Owe to this king ; he reft me, royal nursling,
With wolf's paw from my foster-father's crib,
When his fierce litter ravin'd all Northumbria,
My state unknown to him ; and rear'd me up
Forsooth his glee-maid, marking in mine eye

Gleams of the gentle craft, through all my sullenness ;
 For woodland airs, sweet brooks, and waterfalls,
 Had so entuned my soul, that, bred among them,
 Bird-like, its native speech had needs been song.
 But what was this fine favour ! weighs it even
 One grain against the globe of ill he wrought me ?
 No ! yet, to quiet Conscience, the heart's worm,
 Most gnawing tenderest natures,—here I promise
 If this crown'd robber fall, at least for once
 The gray gull shall not feast on him, the Raven
 Shall not pluck out his heart :—yea, he shall scape
 The Wild-cat near his bed, with flame-green eyes
 Watching his throat lie bare !—will that content thee ?
 Come dallier, come !

FERGUS. She draws me by the heartstring ;
 'Twill break if I hold back, and life give with it,
 Lost to me like my loved-one—I must go !—
 To leave her under guide of her own wildness,
 Helpless, yet holding out such baits for harm,
 Starr'd so with gems, herself pure beauty's pearl,—
 Impossible ! impossible !—Farewell
 All foresight, prudence, memory, and remorse,
 Young Wisdom's soft resolves, that melt away
 Before Love's sunny curls and ardent smile !—
 On then !

RUNILDA (*opening the orchard gate*). Come forth, thou
 solitary bittern !
 For ever booming deep, as thou didst swell
 The hollowest reed i' the vale,—thy hate to man !

Enter BRUERN.

Murmur as low to me—Are the steeds come ?
 BRUERN. Down in the bosky dingle, where Eve's shadows
 Have thicken'd into Night : we've but to skirt it
 Like bats, and be within the wilds at once.

RUNILDA (*to FERGUS*). This is my harp-bearer—
 BRUERN. Who bears a sword
 Too, that can make sweet music on a helm
 As e'er struck up by War-smith !

RUNILDA. Let's begone !
 FERGUS. O what a momentary step it is
 From safety into peril, weal to woe,
 From right to wrong !—Who is thy prompter, Maiden,
 In this most fearful act ? Or is it alone

Fantasy's lamp thou followest, as a star,
When but a gilded vapour?

RUNILDA. Thou'lt hear all
As we go on—but first come on!—Ah! faithless—
[*Exeunt through the orchard gate.*]

Scene III.

An Apartment in the Monastery.

EDMUND *alone, reading a scroll.*

EDMUND. Heavens, am I too, like Edwin, the first
Etheling.
Mark'd by this jealous and unnatural brother,
Down, for immediate death?—Sight-blasting scroll!—
(*Reads.*)—"To Alger. thane. See execution done
On Edmund Etheling, forthwith. I, ETHELSTAN."—
Stamp'd with his private sign! and 'neath his pillow
Ready at hand for launching, like a dagger!
And left there heedless, to be found by chance,
As if he dealt out deaths with such loose hand
Often he felt not when men's fates slipp'd from him!—
O murderous! monstrous!—Thanks good Prior, thanks,
Thy hint came apt. No sleep for me in marble!
His majesty shall save in mason work
And funeral charges, sackcloth suits, and tears;
Fine satisfaction to my ghost forsooth!—
What have I done? What has poor Edmund done,
Or left undone, that might deserve such doom
From this lamb-visaged, tiger-hearted tyrant?
This under-scowling simperer! this hypocrite
Who smiles and stabs!—this yellow-blooded traitor,
Whose eye-whites should, like some gilt, squinting god's,
Glisten suspicion, were aught true about him!—
Whither shall I betake me? to what wilderness
So intricate his bloodhounds shall not track me?
Why, 'tis as well turn rebel, if condemn'd
To traitor's death when none!—I'll join the plot
Our Prior oft hath glanced at, and now urgeth
As imminent to succeed, with those brave hearts
Who have, since Edwin's fate, stood to their vows
Of vengeance against bastard Ethelstan,
Self-branded murderer!—yea, self-confess'd!—

Ah ! can he meditate a twin-like crime
To that he mourns so deep?—But doth he mourn?—
Dissembler? double-tongued and double-faced !
Son of the grand Deceiver ! fare thee well. [*Exit hastily.*]

Scene IV.

The King's Cabinet.

ETHELSTAN *alone.*

ETHELSTAN. Lies there on man so dread a penalty
As terror to enjoy the boon of sleep?
Sleep, in whose cave oblivious sorrow finds
Some sanctuary !—Sleep ! Nature's best blessing !
Doubled, in lieu of other goods denied,
Upon the wretched,—all save those like me !
O'er him that slays her child, our common Mother
Breathes her maternal curse, with bitterest ire,—
“ My best gift be thy bane,” and it is mine !
Shall I sleep even in the grave? Great Martyr !
Let me this crucifixion of the spirit
Endure, meek-bowing unto Heaven's decree !—
Our monks say—*laborare est orare*,
So to my royal duties. [*Sits down at his writing-table.*]

Enter TURKETUL.

Welcome, Chancellor !

Bring'st with thee softer breathings from the South
Than the sharp North still utters? Our new subjects,
Hereabout, live a land-life as unstable
Almost as their old ocean one ; but Time,
Time will assuage the surging of their blood,
And soothe the Danish to a steadier flow
When mingled with the Saxon. How are my Saxons?

TURKETUL. Well, sire, and wish you “good-heal” with
all hearts.

ETHELSTAN. I thank them—Speed their prayer !—
What from our East-men?

TURKETUL. Much as their brethren here—Danes will
be Danes

World over !—break God's peace in heaven itself !—
The Devil, I think, and all his Host were Danish !

ETHELSTAN. Thou feel'st with patriotism too raw the ills
They have brought on us since Great Alfred's time ;
Were not our fathers worse Danes to the Britons?

Yet then subdued themselves?—Let's all be Englishmen!—
Where are the schedules I desired?

TURKETUL. Sir, here.

ETHELSTAN (*reading*). "Barnstaple Charter, to send
burgesses,"—

"Sheriffs for bribery or neglect,"—the mulct
Is too light on them. double it!—"Every Reeve
In every way shall furnish one poor man,
If any such be had, or can be found."—
That, that's my glory as a Lawgiver!

TURKETUL. True, sire: the proudest office to a king,—
General Purveyor for his poor.

ETHELSTAN. No, Chancellor,
But Ethelstan's proud honour in this law,
Best proof of his paternal governance,
Is that it notes—the poor man "must be found":
He came unsought when I began to reign!

TURKETUL. Beggars are rare, no doubt,—but 'tis among
Your Saxons, sire!

ETHELSTAN. In this and everything,
I tell you, we'll be Saxons all ere long:
My kingdom now is one. compact, and round,
To make it which my several wars have tended,
As their great aim and good. Enough of that.—
My library, you've brought it safe? no volume
Lost or forgot?

TURKETUL. 'Tis safer than myself,
Who have lost somewhat of my girth's full volume,
Riding and baiting not!—The store of books
Is safe at hand.

ETHELSTAN. Good! let me see it.

TURKETUL (*to the Guard*). Ho there!

ETHELSTAN. I have sigh'd for them oft—oft—

[*A small Book-case brought in.*

My best solacers!

Mute speakers to my heart! my steadiest friends!
Pillow companions! Fountains whence I draw
Truth purest, deepest counsel! O my comforts—
Are ye all here? Ethelstan's Royal Library!
Treasure unparallel'd!—Let's see: my *Grammar*—
My *Alcuin*—*Donatus Major*—and *Minor*—
Apocalypsis—two *Art Metricals*—
Gloss upon Cato—*De Natura Rerum*—
All! this 's well!

TURKETUL. Truly so large collection
Beseems so learned a king.

ETHELSTAN. It is my vanity !
In books alone am I a spendthrift, sir !
Few, save the French king, I do flatter me,
Have such voluminous treasure of the mind
Heap'd up, so rich, so precious ! Leave me, Chancellor,
I pr'ythee, to the bliss of sweet discourse
With these soul-gladdeners—

Enter GODERIC hastily.

How now,thane?

GODERIC. 'Tis rumour'd
Prince Fergus, sire, is fled, and the Glee-maiden.

ETHELSTAN. Fled !—whither should they fly?—for
what?—Goodthane,

Send out some trackers.

GODERIC. They are sent, my liege,

This moment spurr'd.—

ETHELSTAN. Fool boy ! wild girl !—But fled ?
Why think you they are fled ? who saw them flying?—

Save to the greenwood, like a turtle pair
For privacy—most modest when most amorous ?
I thought the Girl too proud for that ; but Song
Intoxicates us through the ear, and presently
Our staggering virtue falls !—who saw them flying?—

GODERIC. It is but rumour yet.

TURKETUL. Now I remember me,
When near the gate, swift by my left swept past

Three hair-brain'd riders ; among whom the hindmost
Alone, the brief dusk moment let me mark :

I knew him by the brand which Nature set
'Tween his dark brows to stamp him for a felon ;
His calling struck me, though not what he calls him,—
'Twas that same Sword-bearer, condemn'd to drown
But saved—to drier suffocation born !

ETHELSTAN. What ! he released of late from sanctuary ?
A pale brow—all o'er-bristled with black hairs—
Deep, straight-down wrinkles ?

TURKETUL. Gullies !

ETHELSTAN. Limbs distort
With strength, like oaken boughs—his knees upon them
Gnarl'd, as it were—and huge hands—had he not ?

TURKETUL. Exact.

ETHELSTAN. Ha, Bruern ! Dared he lurk here still ?
That bodes no good !—'Twas your said knave, than whom
The stormy bird which shipmen *petrel* name,
No more foretells the dangerous time it loves ;
Even when I freed him, he scarce raised his brow,
But eyed me sulkily as an ox turn'd loose :
Is he not Danish !

TURKETUL. Verily I think
He's one of the Black Strangers !

ETHELSTAN. Humph !

Enter Prince HACO.

Well, Haco ?

Thou wilt not, Scanian, leave me like the Scot ?
Dishonourable youth ! who hath stol'n from me
His person pledged, and my bird-maiden too ;
Beguiling the strange witlessness of genius
Which can see knavery through, though not a knave !

HACO. I m sad almost to tears, your grace !

ETHELSTAN. Why comes not
Childe Edmund, with bright filial looks to cheer me ?
Told you him that I ask'd ?

HACO. I did, your grace :
He answer'd—nought.

ETHELSTAN. Ay ! more ingratitude ?
Thou hid'st the worst of it !—Well, since he comes not,
The king shall go to him !—(To GODERIC) Search tho-
roughly !

[*Exeunt omnes.*]

Scene V.

The Woods.

Enter EDMUND disguised.

EDMUND. Can I reach Fredda-thorpe my 'scape is sure :
That's but a steed's swift flight across the wolds
Into St. Cuthbert's Franchise ; thence not far
To Carleol, where the Cumbrian king resides,
And many a thane and warlike elderman
Keep firm-set shoulder, back'd by him, against
This tyrant, in the Westmere fastnesses ;
Their people, half Welsh and whole rebel, think
Their bread most sweet when crush'd from blood-red corn,
And fight like Irish kerns for idle humour :
Better go there and live, than stay and die !

[*Exit.*]

*Scene VI.**The Cloisters.*

ELLISIF, Prior, and a Messenger.

ELLISIF. Nay he shall know it, Prior ! and at once ;
'Twill soon be learn'd else-how ; so let me seem
The first to have heard this sudden tempest rising :
I shall be thank'd for my solicitude.

PRIOR. Lips that, howe'er so honied, bring bad news,
Are touch'd with wormwood by it ; he will hate thee !

ELLISIF. Ah ! this stout fellow here shall bear it all,
Then I'll step in as soother. Say thou comest
From Maiden Ellisif, all haste and terror,
What shall betide him : be much out of breath,
And stretch your neck forth with the horrible news ;
Let fear give worse intelligence through your eyes,
Make pale your lips, and so bechalk your cheeks
That he shall stare as wild !—Go, you've the trick of it !

[*Exit Messenger.*]

PRIOR. 'Twill give his grace the ear-ache for a time !

ELLISIF. 'Twill be a thunderbolt ! he will stand, after it,
Like the scathed oak, a rind of lingering life,
Within—a pillar of ashes !

PRIOR. Such a blow
Must of needs prostrate him, that has received
One worse than other from thy hand but now.

ELLISIF. You know not all ! You know not all !—Stay,
stay !

PRIOR. Prince Edmund's flight struck deep. Will he
hold up ?

Methinks I see him, haggard—wan of hue—
His twisted locks self-loosing them—his eyes
Cast wildly earthward, seeking out his grave !
A man's but heated clay when he's heart-broken.

ELLISIF. Ethelstan ?—he heart-broken ?—if it be so,
For his dread sins, his crimes damnation-deep,
Upon the wheel of Conscience hath his heart
Been broken ! and by that fell ratchet torn
In trembling mutilation scarce survives !
Ay ! there he stands, fiend-haunted ! thinking how
From hundred-handed Vengeance he shall scape
Haply through death's dark loophole—

PRIOR. 'Tis a way !

ELLISIF. Yet fears to drop into the chasm beneath
Lest a worse Torturer seize him !—O he dream'd
Again, last evening, such another dream !

PRIOR. Why not relieve him now from life so burden-
some ?

He cannot well fare worse, whate'er he fears.

ELLISIF. No, gentle Prior ! he must live to help me,
Despite himself, else other friends might bustle them
Between my goal and me. I hope this news
Will not prove apoplectic to his stoutness :

Now will I go, and be his—comforter ! [Exit.

PRIOR. Kind Lady !—To what depth of guile, of guilt,
Will disappointed love, blasted ambition,
Lead that fair devil some call—angel Woman ! [Exit.

Scene VII.

A Chamber at the Nunnery.

EDGITHA *sick on a couch.* Nuns and two Monk-physicians
attending.

EDGITHA. Is the King come ?—My breath grows fainter
still—

I shall not live to see him.

Enter ETHELSTAN.

ETHELSTAN. Must I lose all ?
And thee, for ever—without hope—my Sister ?

EDGITHA. Heaven's will be done ! 'tis better than our
wishes !

Let me, kind daughters, reverend leeches, pray
Your leaves awhile—

Physician. She is long past our serving :
Angels tend on her now, she's in their arms !

[Exeunt Nuns and Physicians.]

ETHELSTAN. Whence this so sudden fate ?

EDGITHA. Of little moment,
Since it is fate !—Sit down by me, dear Brother,
And let me smoothe thy pale, broad brow once more,
Be my hand not too chill.—Ah ! what is here ?
Has Death's dim curtain fallen before mine eyes
Already, that thou look'st so wan, so faded ?

ETHELSTAN. Wilt leave me—me thus grief-worn?

EDGITHA. O you heavens!

His hair is gray! in one short night turn'd gray
From golden!—O God! God! what he has suffer'd,
That this should be!—Why he looks old enough
To be the father of his years!

ETHELSTAN. I've had

An ill night—nothing worse—

EDGITHA. Worse, worse, far worse

Than even thy death-struck sister, Ethelstan!
Thou art too silent of thy griefs,—it kills thee!
Ah! thou wilt want me soon!—Hadst thou a friend,
One woman-friend to cheer thee, when I'm gone!
'Tis my chief pain in dying!

ETHELSTAN. What's in thy heart,

Thou look'st so steadfast on me?

EDGITHA. Maiden Ellisif

Is child of traitor Alfred!

ETHELSTAN. Alfred thane.

EDGITHA. Traitor he was, Heaven spoke it!—Is she
true?—

Doth not the basilisk beget the basilisk?
Flows balm from henbane? or do innocent doves
Hatch in the shells of crocodiles?—I speak
Now with a voice authentic as the dead,
Whose fixed features can mask truth no more!
Temp'rate, tongue-charitable, was I ever;
To bear false witness now, were at heaven's gate
To fling a broken tablet of the Law,
Yet think to enter!—With this dying breath,
Beware of Maiden Ellisif!

ETHELSTAN. My Queen,

My Wife, elect? my earliest love that was,
My latest that shall be? whose graven image
Will hold its print on this idolatrous heart
When crumbled into dust?

EDGITHA. And, like idolatry,

Be punish'd sore!

ETHELSTAN. O Sister, say not, say not

She's faithless!

EDGITHA. Thou hast had thy Warning Voice

From the tomb-brink itself!

ETHELSTAN. Mean'st thou of Edwin's?

EDGITHA. I have no breath for policy—She hates thee!

She hates us both, me because Love's soft scarf
 Blinded not these poor eyes, that have seen through her :
 We women—yea, the simplest of us all—
 Are keen heart-searchers, specially of women.
 When we last greeted, she did wind about me
 Her cold, smooth form, as if a snake embraced me
 And fain would strangle—

ETHELSTAN. Ah ! no more, no more !
 Speak of thyself : how feel'st ?

EDGITHA. Dead—I am poison'd !

ETHELSTAN. Poison'd ?

EDGITHA. Find out by whom—I pray
 thee find it

When Edgitha's no more ; not to avenge her,
 But to find what fell traitress sits so near thee.

ETHELSTAN. 'Tis a she-devil then, thou'rt sure of that ?
 Thy Nuns shall take the fiery test—

EDGITHA. Ah, spare them !
 They are as innocent of it, as the flock
 Of their dumb mother's death upon the shambles.—
 Look to the Novices !—Now call my servants.

ETHELSTAN. It turns my heart-blood cold to think it so !
 It is too horrible !—

EDGITHA. Pray, draw the curtain—

Scene closes.

Scene VIII.

The King's Cabinet.

Enter ETHELSTAN.

ETHELSTAN. How many deaths we die with those we
 love

Who sink before us !—deaths of pang severer
 Than is our own departure,—oft small pain !
 How many living deaths do we endure,
 Our friendships, our affections kill'd, in which
 We had our best of being !—'Twas the lot
 Our little ignorant hands drew when we groped,
 Blind embryos, in nature's darkling bosom,
 For that sad prize—long life !—That I had died
 When I loved nought beyond my mother's breast

And it, not for her sake, but its sweet nourishment !
 O Heaven ! what misanthropes would make of us,
 Kindliness ill-requited !—blood turns gall,
 Hearts become spleens, and we grow even to hate
 God's fairest image, in its feminine form,
 That creature which all earthly goodness seem'd
 To breathe in, as a pure and beautiful shrine
 For earthly love's best worship !—Can it be
 That this bright shape angelical should prove
 A demon's house within ?—I am the mariner
 On a strange sea, with every storm that blows
 Whirling me every way, yet leaving me
 The piece of still distraction that I stood,
 Not knowing which to move with.—Now, what's here

*Enter TURKETUL, ALGER, GODERIC, and other Chiefs
 the Prior and Messenger.*

TURKETUL. A messenger, who says he bears dread
 news
 To king and kingdom !

ETHELSTAN. Whence ? from whom ?

Messenger. Her Grace,

The queen presumptive, who, all haste and terror
 What may betide her liege, sends word :—The Danes,
 Fierce Anlaf at their front, and host on host
 At flank and rear—the ever-dangerous Irish—
 Cambrians, Cumbrians, led by Edwal, Eogan,—
 Northmen by Harald Blue-Tooth's war-like son—
 Picts and Orcadians—with his Albin-Scots,
 Grey Constantine—the pirate-bands collegued
 Under their Sea-kings by strong hope of spoil—
 These piled on others, hundreds of deep-hull'd ships
 Whose emptiest weight makes ocean mount the shores,
 Disgorge at Humber-mouth, as if the sea
 Its multitudinous monsters turn'd to men,
 And cast them shoal on shoal upon our Isle !

ETHELSTAN. Thank heaven !—this breathes new life in
 me !—thank heaven !

Chancellor, southward, and bring up my Saxons—
 You, Goderic, Alger, thanes, stand the foe here
 With your stout countrymen—I will to York
 Where my guards lie prompt for this imminence—
 Away !—Come soon to conquest !—You, bold Prior,
 Be rife with our good men of Beverley

To back these warlike thanes—I know your citizens !
 Men made of rock !—So there, my armour, knights !—
 Unhappy Edmund ! Danes upon the field,
 And thou not !—leaving all the joy of battle
 To Ethelstan alone ! [Exit.
 PRIOR. So speeds our thunderbolt !

Scene IX.

The Danish Camp, with the Reafen standard flying.

ANLAF, CONSTANTINE, EDWAL, FRODA, GORM, FERGUS,
 RUNILDA. *Sea-kings, Chiefs, and Soldiers.*

CONSTANTINE. Were it not well, sage Kings and prudent
 Yarls,
 Our fluttering host at length flock'd round the Reafen,
 Into some order ? A wild flight of swans
 Or geese, methinks, hath more !

ANLAF. A stirring scene,
 In sooth, gray sire ; it moves yet fixes still
 My glorying soul and gaze !—What would you have ?
 The swing of the billows must go out of us
 Ere we can steady us !—A tide of men !
 Lo ! how the living deluge sinks and swells,
 Down slope—up steep—bursting away bytimes
 O'er rock or hill, like black floods fringed with foam,
 And with an angrier murmur ! To my ear
 'Tis sweet as amorous coo of coupling doves !
 Believe me it looks well : I like to mark
 These children of the Sea-mew and the Raven
 Settling uneasily on such rich fields
 Full of their larger purpose to seize all,—
 Not fixing, poor tame fowl ! on first-come farm.

GORM. And I !—Ho, how my heart bounds in my bosom,
 Mine eyes burn in their caverns for great joy
 To think of striding these broad cultures o'er,
 And strewing them with limbs !

CONSTANTINE (*looking forth*). Who are those heroes
 I see with plumeless helmets ?

GORM. Jomsburgers all !—
 We know not fear, they not the name of it !

CONSTANTINE. Ay : they've just slaughtered to a man,
 I see,
 Those Welsh-kin, at a struggle for some kine.

GORM. By Thor, good strikers ! it was quickly done !

EDWAL (*drawing*). My Britons slain?—help, Cymri !

GORM (*drawing*). All Sea-riders,

Help the sea-city of Jomsburg !—Havoc ! havoc !

ANLAF. Hold !—who to quarrel moves one step, I send

The lightning of this sword-flash through his heart !—

How shall we prosper, noble chiefs and princes,

'Gainst Ethelstan, war-crafty as he is,

If thus, when we should fall like mountains on him,

Hurling we crush ourselves to dust ? O shame !

GORM. Why, let's fall on, then—somewhere, if not here !

FRODA. Whither speed first ?

ANLAF. Wherefore not straight to York,

Deem'd by my father, Sihtric, and the Danes,

Mid-fortress of their kingdom ?

GORM. On then—on !

CONSTANTINE. Green wit for once jumps with grey
wisdom : Ay !

No elsewhere than to York.

RUNILDA (*coming forward*). Anywhere else !

A shower of blood hangs in that crimson sky,

Which our own thunder would bring down upon us !

Go elsewhere than to York ! The Dragon's there !—

Listen and learn : [*She chants to the harp.*]

The knot in the trunk
Is the tough of the tree !
The bale of the barque
Is the breaker at sea !
The fortress in fight
Ever keepeth the field !
The Dragon's at York
Who yet never would yield !

Go not to York, I say !

ANLAF. Hear our young prophetess !

FRODA. Hear dark-eyed Herva !

GORM. Hear King Ella's daughter !

(*Kneeling*) Gorm to the bright divinity in woman

That shines on heroes, bends his iron knee !—

Whither wouldst have us wing ? where is our prey ?

RUNILDA (*chanting*).

Go where the wild Bear-seekers go !
Where the wild winds bleaker blow !
Go where paler springs the corn !
Where more pale doth spring the Morn !
Northman's still Northumbria land !
Northumbria shall to Northman stand ;

There shall aye the Reafen hover,
 His wings broad-shadow him on the ground,
 All that his black shape shall cover,
 Be his, while earth the sun goes round !

To North !—by far-off axes hewn
 I hear the groaning forests fall,
 Forests of men, in ranks bestrewn,
 Northward ! to north, ye Northmen all !

Several. Northward ! north ! north !

CONSTANTINE. Doth it so well become
 Grown men to take a rapturous girl for guide ?

RUNILDA (*chanting*).

Gray head ; get thee gone thy best gate with thy Gael to the Grampians !
 Woe waits thee, deep heart-wounds, as wise as thou art and as warlike !
 The blood-drinking barb bends her way to the breast of the bright-
 hair'd !

The spear speedeth swift on the wind to the wound, her red station !
 Each moment, to man the misguided, is mother of mourning !

ANLAF. How sweet she rings the letter through her
 rhyme,
 With double, treble tricks of curious art,
 In every stave !—She hath the gift of Song
 Better than any Skald !

FRODA. Most sure, inspired !

CONSTANTINE. Well, let us northward ; you'll be nearer
 friends.

GORM. Let's sweep along the coast, that so our plunder
 In the brown-bosom'd ships may glide beside us.

ANLAF. To horse then !—Pluck the Reafen from her
 perch !

[*It is brought forward.*]

Thou ravager of earth ! grant us good spoil,—
 Ethelstan, rich in bracelets, and his host
 Bright with his goldenness that shines on all !—
 To horse, ye Danish Riders ! let the ground
 Thunder beneath our steeds, till this whole land
 Shake inwardly ! that he alone, Usurper,
 Whilst his men fly him, shall stand fix'd in fear,
 Till the black war-cloud bursts upon his head,—
 Then be no further found when all is still !
 Northward !

[*Exeunt omnes.*]

ACT IV.

Scene I.

A Forest on the way to Brunanburh.

Enter ETHELSTAN, with House-carls.

ETHELSTAN. Pleasant, in these dim woods where Quiet dwells,

To hold sweet under-talk with her, whose voice
Spirit-like, whispers us beneath the boughs,
Herself unseen ! Pleasant with light foot-fall
To press rich Autumn's bed of russet leaves,
Make the warm-smelling moss give out its odour,
And here, unbonneted, in sunless noon,
Drink the green air, refreshing both to sense
And soul world-wearied !—Blest the Woodman sure
Who lives his lusty life out here, and whistles it
Lark-like away, the blither nearer heaven !
Perchance he hath his hut among these bowers,
His wife beloved and babe ?—some one that smiles
Cheer thee ! when drooping he goes home at eve—
But Ethelstan ! crown'd Ethelstan !—

We linger, fellows !

By St. John Beverley we're all entranced !
O I could still my beating heart to hear
That gentle bird's grove-buried song !—Away !
Our fortunes will slide from us if we stay !

Enter a House-carl.

House-carl. My liege, the followers report just now
A prisoner of price.

ETHELSTAN. Bring him before us.

Enter House-carls with Prisoner.

What runagate art thou ? that when the foes
Thicken about us, tak'st that coward time
Thus to desert thy country and thy king ?—
Some wretch, half-Dane, all traitor ?

Prisoner.

A true Saxon !

Wretch enough to be born thy brother !

[Throws off his disguise.]

ETHELSTAN. Edmund !
 Childe Edmund !—to my heart ! No, I'll not clasp thee ;
 Thou art a froward boy that must be taught
 By rigour and restraint.—Leave us ! [*Exeunt House-carls.*
 Ungrateful !

Have I not shown a father's gravest care,
 Mix'd with a mother's mildest, ever for thee ?
 And yet thou'lt play the sullen with me thus,
 The truant, yea the o'er-grown micher !—Wherefore ?
 Because I check'd thee gently for thy good
 Some days since !

EDMUND. I confess that—but—

ETHELSTAN. But folly !

Be wiser for thyself another time ;
 It might have cost thee blood—The Dane's upon us !
 I want thee, Edmund—All's forgiven, forgot !
 Thou'rt my right arm again !—Come hither, lad :
 These supple kinsmen of the galloping waves
 Will soon o'er-ride Northumbria—that's their custom !
 Thou must with some few men hang on their rear
 To hold them back ; hie swift to Derwent stream—
 Cross by the windmill's boat—

EDMUND (*falling on his knees*). Spare me ! O spare me !
 Why should poor, guiltless Edmund thus be sent
 To his cold grave so soon ?

ETHELSTAN. Soon ? at these years ?
 When for a Saxon was it ever “soon,”—
 Most for a kinsman of Great Alfred, “soon,”—
 To die defending Mother-land ?—I never
 Thought thee unworthy of thy race before !

EDMUND. Unworthy is it then to wish me drown'd
 In Danish blood rather than Derwent stream ?

[*Giving the Death Warrant.*
 ETHELSTAN. Ha ! treachery !—domestic treachery !—
 How was this seal'd ?—Who has been at my pillow ?—
 True Edgitha,—from traitors traitresses !—
 And yet the Maiden may explain—I'll write to her,
 I will not see her,—on that side I'm weak !—
 Edmund, here is my dagger, here my breast,
 Strike if thou fear'st me, Childe !—Strike, and be king !

EDMUND (*embracing him*). Best father ! brother loved !
 dear liege ! O pardon me !
 (*Starting up.*) Thou said'st by boat—the Derwent stream—
 farewell ! [*Exit.*

ETHELSTAN. Royal-soul'd Edmund !—No ! they shall
 not make thee
 Hate me ; I will not suffer them do that !
 A little o'er-suspicious art thou, Edmund ;
 Dim-vision'd ! for clear-sighted men see where
 Danger is not, as well as where it is,
 Have owl and eagle eyes to see in the dark
 And daylight both.—Yet, verily, thou hadst
 Some cause !—O Woman, heaven's own daughter or hell's !
 [Exit.]

Scene II.

A Road. Troops upon their march.

Enter ELLISIF, ALGER, and the Prior.

ELLISIF. Both have done well : ye lost the fight, yet
 saved
 Your credits with the king.
 PRIOR. My promised bishopric,
 I hope too, lady ?
 ELLISIF. There's no danger of it :
 Ye shall stand higher still when I am queen.
 ALGER. With deference, there may come a doubt—
 ELLISIF. None ! none !
 If, from brute prejudice 'gainst female sway,
 The Wessex crown cannot by law descend,
 As it is worded, to the spindle side,
 Why then, my charms of person and of power
 Shall win young Edmund, or some other sprout
 From the root royal, who shall king it under me.
 Edmund I trust hath join'd our Cumbrian friends,
 And hastes them to our aid : then all were sure !
 ALGER. Yes, had not Ethelstan been let live on.
 ELLISIF. That was ill luck ; I kept him as a poise
 To Anlaf, needful after victory,
 For 't was but playing one against the other
 Could make my game safe. I had good hope too,
 Still to have led him blindfold, but some chance
 Hath shaken him from his unsuspectingness.
 We cannot scape ill-luck, though we may cure it :
 I have a stratagem in store for him
 He wots not of, that might redeem it all ;
 Between my sword and Anlaf's he is slain !

PRIOR. And then we use Prince Edmund as the poise,
Or t'other royal sprout—is it not so?

ELLISIF. So. Now let's on, as we agreed, to fill
Our parts allotted in this final scene :
Courage !—risk nought, nought win ! We risk but breath—
Mere life, and may win all that makes life glorious !

[*Exeunt.*]

Scene III.

ETHELSTAN'S Tent. *A Banquet set forth.*

ETHELSTAN, TURKETUL, HACO, EGIL SKILLAGRYM *with
a harp, and other guests.*

ETHELSTAN. Send round the harp ! Each chief awake
its strain !—

Churl in his soul, whose voice and hand unskill'd
Aids not the circling glee !—Send round the horn
Foam-crested ! the blithe harp's companion boon !
High-fill'd with amber mead, rich ale, bright wine !
Let both the festive shells go swiftly round,
That we may drink at once the double sweetness
Through lip and ear !—raise the dead spirit of joy,
And charm the serpents of the heart to sleep,
Or if not, drown them !— (*To EGIL.*) By thee, noble
stranger,
Have harp and horn, and host, been honour'd deeply !
From thy rapt lay, blown locks, and heaven-ward eye,
Thou must be some famed minstrel ?

EGIL. A Sea-king !

Who midst the idle rattle of the shrouds
Oft listening to the lonely Merman's song,
Found a sad cheer in it, and learn'd like him
To make society in my sea-solitude
With mine own voice, that aye from cliff and wave
Leap'd back to me in Echo's lovelier form !
So I grew up what Northmen name a Skalld,
Southrons a Sceop, or shaper of verse, a poet,—
Soul-fraught with lightsome burden of all rhymes !
Warrior and Minstrel thus, I, at the sound
Of that loud trump, Glory's bright blazoner,
Which blows through all the worlds,—hearing it swell
Thy fame, great Ethelstan, the Bracelet-giver !
Bravest and best of kings ! and that thou sought'st

From ablest hands their iron aid,—at once
I stood before thee, Egil Skillagrym !

ETHELSTAN. He that slew fierce King Eric's son, and
gain'd
His "Ransom" from grim Vengeance by a Song?

EGIL. Even he !—Such virtue in good minstrelling !—
I slew him a brace of kin beside his son !

ETHELSTAN. Welcome ! as wild swan to the snowy brood,
Helping them buffet with the ocean wind !—
Accept this bracelet gemm'd, and these two cabinets
Fill'd with pure silver. Thou shalt have command.

EGIL. More, generous king !—let it be in the front,
So I may use stout voice and glaive together,
Raising the war-song, smiting down the foe !

ETHELSTAN. As thou wilt, gallant bard !—Now, Chan-
cellor,
A Saxon rhyme !

TURKETUL. I've a rough stave or two
Which had been well before the Northman sung,
But now 'twill sound too homely. Ne'ertheless—

Enter Messenger, with a letter.

ETHELSTAN. Pardon me, friends—Chancellor, fill my
chair.
(*To the Messenger.*) You brought me screech-owl news
before ; is this
Of the same tenor?—for I need it not ;
Mine enemies are now within my reach,
That which a brave man only wants !—Come hither.
[*Exit with Messenger.*

Scene changes to another part of the Tent.

Enter ETHELSTAN, reading a letter.

"I am too proud to defend me against suspicions, or foul
accusations : the breath of the dying is seldom sweet."—
True ! when they are poisoned !—How should she tell my
Sister accused her, unless feeling its likelihood?—Well :
"But were you not blinded by aversion now, as some while
since by love,"—Ha ! So I was blinded by love?—"you
would see the committer of both these crimes in her who
has fled, fearing trial, rather than in her who remains to
dare it—in the young she-wolf Runilda, rather than in the
still, to thee, tender-hearted—ELLISIF."

Runilda? what! my little wild glee-maiden!
 It is not like the creature!—a frank thing,
 Whose candid blood, as passion comes and goes,
 Speaks vividly in her colouring brow and cheek;
 But for cold truculence, considerate treason,
 As fit as unfa'n angel for a fiend!
 Odd! is it not, how near are *friend* and *fiend*?
 When I say "friend," I stutter into 'fiend';
 There's but a burning consonant between them!
 Add the dog-letter, fiend is friend! I toy
 With my embosom'd viper. Stay, a postscript:—

"Herewith I send thy brother Edwin's well-known sword,
 first to fulfil thy often-heard wish for that famous relic;
 secondly, as a proof who is the traitress, this weapon having
 been found by her pursuers, which they on oath can attest.
 Some of them who visited, as spies, the Danish tents,
 avouch that Runilda and her paramour, Fergus, are there:
Anlaf is her uncle."

Anlaf her uncle! And her attendant, Bruern,
 My brother's sword-bearer! these do point at her.
 Could the dark spirit of the Dane come o'er
 The lustre of the cherub that was in her,
 Blackening it thus? Or was my petted she-wolf
 Tame and caressable till her claws were grown,
 Then treacherous to her fondler through dire faithfulness
 To the o'ermastering savage in her blood?
 Anlaf her uncle!—he, too, hath his spies
 Doubtless abroad: have they into her soul
 Whisper'd their villainous minds, contributing
 Every one, the foul devils that possess'd him,
 To fill her with a legion? Woful thoughts!
 Yet it may be so! Fain would my belief
 Take part with my affections, wishes, hopes,
 All strong for Ellisif still! Wretched credulity!
 O there's internal war 'gainst which the state
 Of my divided self cannot stand long!
 Away! I must put heart into all others,
 Though sorrow and care eat up mine own!—To banquet!
[Exit.

Scene as before the last.

Guests as before. ANLAF disguised as a Harper,

TURKETUL (*to ANLAF*). Rest here : the King will come anon.

ANLAF.

I saw

The Wessex Dragon glittering o'er the tent,
And guess'd his royal brood lay under it !
Ethelstan king, loves he the minstrel-art ?

TURKETUL. Nought better, save the Laws and written lore.

It is a proverb with us, "No one ever
Hath ruled more legally or more learnedly."
He comes, his armour lights the doorway.—

Enter ETHELSTAN.

ANLAF (*to himself*).

Gorgeously,

As a torch borne before him : that's my prize,
When I tread on his breast !—He holds him well,
Slim-flank'd, but ample-chested as my steed,
Neck firm enough to bear a hundred crowns,
Had he usurp'd them ! I shall smile to humble
That front of war he wears, yet, Saxon-like,
So placid in its pride !—Ay, are the tresses
That gave, 'twas said, such lustre to the air,—
That down his shoulders flow'd as rich as sands
Down golden channels,—are they blanch'd thus early ?
All's one !—they'll soon be ting'd !—He marks me not.

HACO. Patience ! his full tense eye looking so far
At his great objects can but ill discern
The petty things beside him.

ETHELSTAN.

Pardon my absence

Even when in your presence, princely friends !
A new bard-militant ? a sea-king, ha ?

ANLAF. Sea-rover, in good truth ! soldier, and singer !

ETHELSTAN. Give him a cup of the king's wine. Let's have

A sample of thy mystery.

ANLAF.

What mystery ?

ETHELSTAN. Why, of thy song-craft !—We ne'er doubt thee, friend,

A well-skill'd cleaver of shields and billows too,
Thou look'st so tall a fellow, and art limb'd

So answerably to thy active eye,
 As hawk's quick glance doth suit his eager talons,
 That grasp their perch like prey. What takes thy mind?

ANLAF. My thoughts were wandering—only for a theme—

ETHELSTAN. And the grand kindred of Great Alfred by?

ANLAF. True!—Alfred is an apposite theme—O duldard!—

I am unused to sing—for Saxon ears—
 Bear with me, pray you!—'Tis a simple rhyme.

[Chanting to his harp.]

From Athelney's Island
 Deep-sunk in the forest,
 By deserts defended,
 By moor and by marish:
 Haunt of the wild foxes!
 Home of the catamount!
 Fresh-water haven
 For war-shatter'd Saxons!
 From Athelney's Island
 The Danes camping round it,
 And feasting, carousing,
 And dicing, and chaunting,
 Forgetfully dreaming
 The wolf when he sleepeth
 The prey never gaineth;
 And the bird of Oblivion
 Sings still by the drinkers
 Their souls away stealing!
 From Athelney's Island
 Steals forth hidden Alfred,
 The monarch a minstrel!
 His cloak o'er his armour,
 The cloud of its brightness!
 His harp-touches sparkle
 Like sunbeams that sprinkle
 The breast of the water!
 He strikes his cords shriller
 Lest his mail be heard tingle!
 From Athelney's Island
 To the banquet, wolf-starven,
 Both maw and eye-bungry,
 He comes, noble Alfred,
 Ever keen, ever watchful,
 For all he might gather
 That fell from king Guthrum
 Or lay round about him.
 Then to Athelney's Island
 With maw and eye-plunder,
 He hastes him, the crafty,
 The minstrel now monarch!
 And soon it bested him
 At Ethandune battle,
 Where he pluck'd the dark Reafen

Of half her broad pinion !
Fierce Alfred, the minstrel,
The crafty, the valiant,
The grandsire renowned
Of Ethelstan, dragon !
The pride of the Saxons !
The star of their glory !
And theme of Earth's vessel
That floats upon Ages !

EGIL. A lay well sung, and sure extemporal !
(*To TURKETUL aside*) 'Twas slight enough in art—one see-saw chime !—

No counter-change !—No quaint alliteration !—
But that we're bound to praise a brother-bard,
I'd say those sinewy fingers oftener twang'd
The bow's string than the harp's !

TURKETUL. Is he not Danish ?

EGIL. He hath the accent.

TURKETUL. Truly a vile screamer !

He'd scare a rookery—the very nests
Would take wing !—'Mongst the croaking tribe, I grant,
His voice had borne the prize from all the bog !

ETHELSTAN (*to ANLAF*). Put up thy gifts. Go, if thou wilt, and whither :

Song, the best form of thought, should be most free !

ANLAF. Thanks, liberal sir !—I will return bytimes,
And rouse you with another kind of music ! [*Exit.*]

ETHELSTAN. Now princes, thanes, and chieftains, let me father-like,

Dismiss ye to your rest : get vigour from it
For the morn's victory ! we must be stirring
With dawn, like game-cocks, lest these gulls and ravens
Should seem more birds of the sun than we, and thence
Strut braver up to us :—good night !—I'll forth
Upon my rounds : an hour ere day-light, warriors,
Be all here ready-arm'd !—Stay, Alger, Thorwolf,
You, of the van, leaders with Egil king,
Take these next tents : sleep soundly ! never Morn,
Blithe ruffler, blew her trumpet half so shrill,
As my loud battle-call shall wake ye up
Unto this day of triumph !—Brief good night !—
Come with me, Haco !

*Scene IV.**The Saxon Camp. A Sentinel behind. Moonlight.*

Enter ANLAF: he looks cautiously round, cuts a sod from the earth, and buries under it the gifts he has received from ETHELSTAN: then departs. After a time, enter ETHELSTAN and HACO.

ETHELSTAN. How peacefully yon Moon enjoys her reign,
 No rival mooting it, till she descends
 Of her own will, and yields her studded throne
 To her heaven-sanction'd heritor!—How smooth
 And green is this fresh sward, which by to-morrow
 Will be dug rough with hoofs, and plough'd with spears,
 And stain'd with rueful purple! O War, war,
 Thou stern amusement of ambitious minds!
 Have I loved thee too well, and not the cause
 That hallows thee,—succeeding honour and peace?—
 (*To the Sentinel.*) How goes it, soldier? All seems quiet
 here?

Sentinel. Yes, sire, and will remain so, since our enemies
 Come to our camp, and mix with us as friends!

HACO. What means the churl to speak so blunt to
 kings?

Sentinel. I mean that Anlaf Dane hath been among us,
 Taking his note of where and how we lie,
 Fox, wolf, and lurcher,—all in one!

ETHELSTAN. King Anlaf?

Sentinel. That same, my liege; he pass'd but now by me

HACO. Rare cowardice! this fellow's fear creates
 A shadowy foe, of moonshine!

ETHELSTAN. Patience, Haco!—
 Why shouldst thou make thyself suspected, friend,
 By such a proofless story and improbable?

Sentinel. Here is my proof—

[*Dashing his battle-axe into the earth, money and jewels
 fly up.*]

Doth that look probable?

ETHELSTAN. They are my very gifts to that false Harper!

Sentinel. He came, and as he would shake reptiles off
 That clung to him with odious love, he tosses
 These precious things to earth—spurns them—and tramples
 them—

Then scores me up the turf, and treads them into it !—
Looks not this like King Anlaf?—Nay, I knew him !

ETHELSTAN. Thou shouldst have seized him then :
where was thy loyalty ?

Sentinel. That oath I've ta'en to thee I took to Anlaf
When he was king of Dane-law ; had I now
Betray'd him, I might do as much by thee !

ETHELSTAN. Answer'd !—Have these for part-reward.
[Pointing to the gifts.]

Sentinel. If churls
Dare speak thus with a king, I would advise him
To shift his tent into some other quarter.

HACO. 'Twere well, your grace !—The Dane hath
mark'd it, sure,
For some fierce onslaught.

ETHELSTAN. No—no—let it stand.—
(*To the Sentinel.*) I'll not forget thee and thy twofold faith :
Good night !—Keep steady watch until relieved.—
(*To himself.*) We'll let the tent stand, with the Dragon
over it :

Yon Prior, Edmund tells me of, his friend,
And friend of every mal-content i' the kingdom,
Yon bishop-elect of Shirebourne, hath a friendship
With Maiden Ellisif too—'twas she elected him !—
Which thickens more the dark foul cloud around her :
His sanctity has just arrived, it seems,
In the rear of all his men, to slip off sideways
When battle joins ; he shall have my pavilion,
So will be royally lodged ! and should the Danes
Sack it, why he's the sooner with his friends !—
Come, goshawk ! *[Exeunt ETHELSTAN and HACO.]*

Scene V.

*A Tent in the Danish Camp at Brunanburh. Armour
and Arms.*

FERGUS, and RUNILDA *arming him for battle.*

RUNILDA. There ! it droops well !—O how his plume
becomes him,
As the proud-bending pine the promontory !—
And yet methinks it droops too much—it should not
Shade his blue eyes from sight !—Now, is it better ?

Dost feel it sway, with pleasant heaviness,
Nobly upon thy brow? Will it do thus?

FERGUS. I should say—ay, and yet would fain say—no,
To keep thy sweet hands still about my face,
Thy delicate fingers touching me like tendrils
Which, 'mid the honeysuckle bowers, I've felt
Softly yet fondly o'er my forehead play!—
How blissful thus—

RUNILDA. His chin! gods, gods, his chin!
A broader, braver ribbon under it!

FERGUS. Thus in mine arms to hold thee, while thou
peer'st

Closely o'er all my looks, as they were far
More precious than thine own and more thy pride!
To feel the halo of thy breath around me
When thy lips part to speak, thou living rose
Grafted into a lily!—Wherefore that sigh?

RUNILDA. Ah me! now thou art deck'd with mine own care,
I could sit down and weep to send thee forth
In all thy gallantry and grace, so trim,
So beautiful, so blooming-young, to battle!

FERGUS. Herva, wilt turn my flush of pride to shame,
With fears I am too much a tenderling
For war's rough pastime,—nought but a male doll
To be dress'd up and kiss'd?—Do heroines weep?

RUNILDA. Well, I will sing—

Bright-hair'd Halmar took his bow,
And he bounded blithe o'er the fields of snow;
But the Storm-King whirl'd him in a wreath,
Where he lies as stark as his shaft in the sheath!

Here is your lance—and target—

FERGUS. But my gloves?
Until my hands be rough-shod, all slips from them;
My gloves, sweet Armourer!

RUNILDA. Not yet—not yet—
Ere they be on thou must in turn arm me.

FERGUS. Thee? thee?—O madness! thou arm for the
battle?

A mere slight girl! whole winters yet from womanhood!

RUNILDA. Nay, martial sir, thou'rt but a stripling too!—
Come, arm me! arm me!—Am I not thine to death?

FERGUS. What are these little moulds of panoply
Thou lay'st before me,—hauberk, helm, and greave?—
Pity, O pity, do not put them on!

RUNILDA (*chants as she arms*).

Then Odin's dark daughters rode over the plain,
Chiding on the slow slaughter and chusing the slain !
Cries Gondula, fixing her smile on the fight,
" Ye'll join hands in the Hall of Dead Heroes to-night ! "

FERGUS. Look at this toy of helmets !—'tis too thin,
Too frail, to bear the stroke of Mercy's sword,
Though that mild chastener would warn, not harm thee !
What's here ?

RUNILDA. My brand !

FERGUS. O heaven, 'tis scarce a dagger
To fence away the fate those Saxon deathsmen
Deal with two-handed glaives !—Here is a targe !
One spangle on huge Turketul's shield ! fit thing
To breast the shock of bucklers, when together
Ranks fall like walls in earthquakes, and at once
Rises the hill of ruin !—Here, look here,
A wrist to stem that mighty brunt !—brave wrist !
Thick as a swan's neck, and as white and bendable !
Why, in his steely embrace, War's softest pressure
Would crush thy soul out !

RUNILDA. Wert thou half as safe !
This armour, Dwarfs in Hecla's smithy forged :
See ! the lines graven round it all are Runes—
Mystic inscriptions, full of wizard power
To ward off ill : I am not vulnerable,—
Except by grief !—My soul is very sad !—
What sound is that without ?

FERGUS. Trampling of steeds.

RUNILDA.

Why doth the Night-mare whinny so loud ?
Her heavy knees trample the groaning-one deeper !
Her hurried black mane like a thunder-cloud
Flickers forth serpents of fire o'er the sleeper !
How he writhes him beneath her,
The blue flame breather !
And his eyes wild staring
At hers wilder glaring !
Mark how they glow in their sockets without flashes,
Two gray bale-fires mouldering in their ashes !

FERGUS. Cease ! cease !—No death-cry terrible as this !
Hear you that signal ? ——— [A low war-whistle without.

RUNILDA. It thrills through my marrow !

FERGUS. And my glad heart—if thou wouldst but stay here?—

Come, since it must be so !

RUNILDA. Ay, with my harp !
See how I fling it gallant o'er my shoulder,
As if we tripp'd to banquet !—So we do !
The banquet of the eagle and the raven,
Where they shall have their glut !—Come, my sweet harp,
Echo the warrior's shout and drown his wail
And chant his death-song !—Come, to battle ! battle !

[*Exeunt.*]

ACT V.

Scene I.

The Field of Brunanburh before dawn. Ethelstan's Tent overthrown. Trumpets, war-cries, skirmishes.

Enter ANLAF, EDWAL, FRODA, GORM, and the Reafen-bearer with other Danes.

ANLAF. Forward, ye warriors !—Shall they beat us off
Like drones, when we had storm'd their hive?—On ! on !
Who saw the Dragon down? Did I not trample it
Under the Reafen !

GORM. It was Gorm that quell'd him !
The dragon-king himself, fire-breathing Ethelstan !
At once I pierced to his tent's heart and his.

ANLAF. Saw you him die?

GORM. Watch'd him till on this blade
To the last drop he pour'd his red life out !
So flush a stream at onset was good omen.

ANLAF. Forward then !—lose no fruit of first success ;
Fall on, ye Danish battle-axes !—cleave them down !

All. Forward ! [Exeunt.]

Scene II.

The Camp behind Ethelstan's Tent attacked.

Saxons and Danes at close combat, EGIL with his harp cheering on the Saxons.

EGIL.

Noble Sons of the Island !
Her dauntless defenders !
With the lustre of glory,
Ever shining in story !

Stout-hearted as oaks,
Firm-footed as rocks,
With breast up to blow,
Blunt the sword of the foe !
His loved-ones and lands
Each good Saxon to save,
Let the place where he stands
Be the place for his grave !
Death to the Danish Dogs !
Death to the Loathèd Ones !

(Felling a Dane.)

Take there seven feet of ground for freehold, thou !

Souls of fire, flames of battle !
Defeat to all foemen !
Ye War-smiths well banded,
With hammers two-banded
Their armour make ring
Like anvils, kling ! kling !
Let your lances fly redly
As dragons, and deadly !
Let the wolf of the wood
Fill his jaws purple-streaming,
Prepare ye his food
For the eagle shrill-screaming !
Death to the Danish Dogs !
Death to the Loathèd Ones !

(Striking down another.)

Thy doom slept in my scabbard !—Sleep thou here !

Blight their Host, scathe, and scatter,
Ye thunderbolt forgers !
With strokes high upheaving
Their shielded wall cleaving,
Let their bosses of brass
Break as brittle as glass !
Hew Death a way wide
Through wood and tough hide !
Through their squadrons afar
Make the broad road of slaughter,
Through the dense tide of war
Wind your blades as through water !
Death to the Danish Dogs !
Death to the Loathèd Ones !

Well done ! well done !

Saxons.

Death to the Loathèd Ones !

[Exeunt driving off the Danes.]

Another part of the field.

Enter ALGER and a Captain.

ALGER. Speed fast unto the ford, where Maiden Ellisif
Expects thy message : say the tyrant's slain

Within his tent to-night, and by my aid,
 For which I hope her smiles on me will shine :
 Say that with him all doubt of fortune dies,
 For such an idol was he with his followers
 Their grief must needs unman them, while their foes
 Our friends, who were their equals ere this chance,
 Joy will make giants now. Her grace may therefore
 Strike forward to King Anlaf's camp at once,
 Where Victory and Alger, hand in hand,
 Will ere an hour salute her, queen. Away !

[*Exeunt severally.*]

Scene changes to Brunanburh Hill.

RUNILDA *on a height overlooking the field of battle.* CON-
 STANTINE, FERGUS, and Forces, *below.*

FERGUS. O shame to Albin ! Shall the Scots stand here
 Like icicles, congeal'd and pale with terror,
 When such brave deeds are doing ?

CONSTANTINE. Ours will come
 Anon, believe it, boy—We must stand here
 As stubborn as the hill we have to guard,
 For 'tis our post appointed.

FERGUS. Would that some landslip
 Moved it and us to the front !

CONSTANTINE (*to* RUNILDA). What see'st thou, maiden ?

RUNILDA. I see two dusky forests on a plain,
 Each storm-bent at the other ; back and fro
 They swing by turns, with rustlings harsh of boughs,
 Iron-grown boughs, loose swung or interlock'd !
 Lo, where they grapple, limbs lopp'd off, and torn
 From the poor bleeding trunks, bestrew the ground,
 Brave plummy heads,—rent fibres,—stems split ope
 From top to root !—There falls a stately tree !
 Hear what a crash he drops with ! what a groan !—
 Now rises a rough murmur, like the sea's
 New rushing o'er some rugged-pebbled strand,
 One murmur from both foes, drear harmony !
 Dismallest concord !—feel ye it shake the hill,
 Loud and more loudly rumbling, till the thunder
 Were but faint echo to it !—Now !—hold breath—
 With that vast roar ye heard, like firm-set ice
 Up-broken by the throes of ocean, bursts
 To rough-edged fragments huge, the squadron'd mass,

Floating enormous, heaving bulk 'gainst bulk,
With shock on shock, riven, shattered, or sunk !—
O 'tis a rueful sight ! a ruthless sound !

FERGUS. Let me away !

CONSTANTINE (*withholding him*). Hot-brain ! thy duty's
here ;

Who would do more than his duty oft does less !
Shall we leave bare our flank ?—(*To RUNILDA.*) Daughter,
what now ?

Tell us each change and fortune of the battle.

RUNILDA. There flies the Reafen, like a fiend of air
Gloomily, gathering with restless wing

* Her ravenous brood beneath her !—there she hovers,
A blackness 'tween her foemen and the sun,
Dire spot on it to them !

FERGUS. Doth she fly forward ?

RUNILDA. Against her,—forkèd tongue to hornèd beak,—
A Dragon breathes his scorching ire ; he soars
Fix'd, as if held by magic not a man,
So proud and high—therefore she moves not forward !
Close by his staff an iron cliff of men
Frowns silent, and throws off the clamorous billows
That foam upon its steadfastness in vain ;
Therefore she moves not forward !

CONSTANTINE. Those dumb Sassenach,
How can they fight so firm without their king ?

FERGUS. That scorn of raging in them ruins us !

RUNILDA. Hark ! their one wild *Hurrah* !—now mute
again !

FERGUS. They are advancing ! [*About to rush forth.*

RUNILDA. Scarce !

CONSTANTINE. Stay, parricide !

Wilt thou be accessory to my fate,
Leaving me here defenceless and infirm,
Who could not fling even one light dart of Death,
And am like him a shrunk-up skeleton
That rattle in mine armour ?—Stay, my son !

FERGUS. O duty ! curb of noblest impulses,
His heart who loves to keep thy law, cold virtue !
Is bloodless.—(*To RUNILDA.*) Well, thou piercing voice
and eye,

Rock-eaglet ! what canst shriek about the slaughter ?

RUNILDA. This way—this way—begins it now to bend
Its gory horn !

FERGUS. Ha ! doth the Reafen yield ?

RUNILDA. No ! she points forward still i' the centre ! still
Flying her painted flight against the foe,
Eager to clutch him !

FERGUS. Then doth the Dragon flee ?

RUNILDA. Set like an ominous comet in the sky,
He glitters dun, his mournful lustre shedding
On the too crimson field a deadlier glare !—
'Tis the left wing to me, of both the hosts,
Moves scatter'dly together hitherward :
Now I could name each hero !—There he singles him,
Making his desolation round him—

FERGUS and CONSTANTINE. Anlaf ?

RUNILDA. Tower-heavy Turketul !—O murderous work !
Each club-swing lays a curve of lifeless men
Around his steps—sons, fathers, husbands, lovers—
On whom did hang hundreds of lives !—O cruel !
Thou slay'st us all,—men, women, babes, together !

FERGUS. Can none withstand him ?

RUNILDA. Who is he that stalks
The field like Death himself, where victim ranks
Lie after him in swarths ? He mows his way
Toward that other Destruction, emulous of him ?
I sicken at the sight !—Heart, heart, thy sex
Is changeless—O, I am all woman still !

FERGUS. Have they met yet ?—Who is that champion
grim ?

RUNILDA. His form doth seem of flame—'tis blood !—
all blood !—

I cannot see him through such veil—it blinds me !—
Nearer they come !

FERGUS. Canst see him now ? the hero
Striding at Turketul o'er so much slain ?
Who is he, the tall ghastliness ?

RUNILDA. 'Tis Gorm !
His eyes like wandering fires, and spectral pale,
As icy balls could burn ; his whirlwind hair
Toss'd round his head, as when the tempest-cloud
Doth helm with darkness some bleak pinnacle :
'Tis Gorm !—death-spreading Gorm !—They come—Prepare !
[Rushes down.

(Clashing her harp.)

Glaymore to grasp ! and shield over shoulder !
In peril aye bolder,

Sons of Albin, strain forward like steeds on the start !
 Unto battle ye ever-blithe wenders,
 Erin's bow-benders,
 Strain up each string and each heart !

CONSTANTINE. Stand to it, Scotsmen !

FERGUS. Forth to it, prince of Scots ! [*Rushes out.*

RUNILDA (*bursting from her detainers*). Live—die—dare
 hell with him ! [*Exit.*

CONSTANTINE. Follow, and save them !
 [*Exeunt omnes.*

Scene changes to the Field of Battle.

Trumpets, Combat, &c. Enter TURKETUL.

TURKETUL. I have but air to beat !—Would they'd
 come on,
 Yea even in swarms like bees about a bear,
 I'd paw them to some tune—Ho ! here's a bumble-one !—
 You, gallows-cheater ?

Enter BRUERN.

BRUERN. I am for thee, Ogre !
 Demolisher of our host !

TURKETUL. Where are thy backers ?
 Turketul ne'er lifts club for one alone ! [*Passing out.*

BRUERN. One that may prove too many for thee—
 Stand !

TURKETUL. Highwayman's hail !—Pr'ythee, let harm-
 less people
 Jog on their road in quiet !—Rest you well !
 [*Strikes him dead, and exit.*

Enter FERGUS and RUNILDA.

FERGUS. Stout Bruern, slain !

RUNILDA. Thou slay'st not churls but chieftans,

FERGUS. My sword is hack'd to teeth—give me his
 brand !

RUNILDA. Breathe here : our friends approach not—

FERGUS. Foes are welcomer.

Enter EDMUND and HACO, their swords crimsoned.

EDMUND (*dropping his point as he passes.*) Ah ! my old
 playfellows !—

HACO. Farewell ! [*Exeunt EDMUND and HACO.*

FERGUS. Brave Etheling !
 RUNILDA. Farewell, dear Haco !—fare thee well !—
 farewell !

Scene changes to another part of the Field.

Saxon Forces marching over ; EGIL at their head.

EGIL (*chanting*).

Saxon War-men ! Battle's pride !
 Torrent fierce of conquest's tide !
 Onward like the ocean wide
 Bursting mound and mole asunder !
 Bulwark's fall, and foeman's bane,
 Murmuring for your old domain,
 Sweep them from the battle-plain,
 Whelm them your broad surges under !

Saxon War-men, on with me !
 Valour's sons by Victory !
 'Tween ourselves contention be
 Which bold hero leads the slaughter !
 On ! the wild hawk soaring high,
 Screams for food with famish'd eye !
 Spread it thick as limbs can lie !
 Ne'er such banquet battle brought her !

Saxons. Onward !—we are well breathed—on, noble Egil !

EGIL (*chanting*).

Let the axe heat its steel on the helm !
 And the ruddy blade burn in the wound !
 If the Dane will remain in the realm,
 Cleave him straight to the hips and the ground !

Saxons. Infidels !—heathen robbers !—loathèd-ones !—

EGIL. The locusts of the Baltic !—See ! a cloud of them.
 [*Exeunt rapidly.*]

Enter ANLAF and EDMUND, fighting.

ANLAF. Follow thy hell-bound brother, thou more dam-
 nable !—

Two-fold apostate, thou shalt not escape me !—
 So renegade ! (*disarming EDMUND*) thou shalt never turn
 again,

Except to earth !

[*As he is about to strike, enter ETHELSTAN.*]

ETHELSTAN. Hold, and defend thyself !—
 Art safe, boy ?

[*ANLAF flies.*]

EDMUND. Generous brother ! I, that deemed

They sought'st my life, owe it thee !

ETHELSTAN. Doubt no more ! [*Exeunt.*]

Another part of the Field.

Enter FRODA and GORM, meeting.

GORM. Well happ'd on, brother-ranger of the brine !
How fares it with us ?

FRODA. Thou'rt so blind with dust
And blood and sweat, thou canst not see how goes
The general field !

GORM. By mighty Thor, blind-drunken
With the hot fumes of gore !—How flies the Reafen ?

FRODA. Methinks as I can see her through the darts,
Her beak droops somewhat.

GORM. 'Tis to pluck the dead !
She stoops to pluck the swine-gorged Saxons bare !
Never had else look'd down !

FRODA. Brave Edwal's slain.

GORM. True : as I pass'd him now, a javelin
Stood upright in his heart.—Havoc ! let's on !

FRODA. My bands are this way. [*Exit.*]

GORM. This way, Gorm alone !

Enter TURKETUL.

Monstrous !—the north-sea Kraken come on land !

I thought till now that grisly animal

Had upwards of two feet !—By Thor, I'm proud,

Whate'er he is, to catch the prodigy

At last !—Where must I pierce his leathern scales ?

TURKETUL. Take thy good leisure—view me round and
round !

GORM. Thor, what an ancle !—Thor, what limbs !—O
Thor,

What depth of brawn to bury a sword in !

TURKETUL. Humph !—

There's no such superabundance about thee,

Thou skeleton of a Norway skiff on end !

Thou bugbear from the Valley of Dry Bones !

O how my club will clatter among thy ribs !

I will make broken ice of thee !

GORM. This sword

That strews a field with carnage of itself,

My sway makes Ruin's scythe !—Look how it glitters,
 My blood-wash'd battle-axe, that erst was brown !
 Are these to be despised ?—Know ye my name ?
 Gorm, the Shield-Render !—Has it never clove
 Through thy dull ear ?

TURKETUL. Ay, but I've doff'd my shield,
 Ergo, thou 'rt no shield-render unto me !

GORM. Of nine accomplishments I am full master ;
 In the Norse warrior's circle of the arts,
 Am perfect : At bow, battle-axe, and brand,
 None can approach my skill ; being ambidexter,
 I with two javelins take two lives at once ;
 I play at chess well, besides other games,
 As tossing up three darts, two kept in air,
 One in the hand ; I swim shark-swift ; I skate
 Over earth's broadest bridge, the Arctic ice,
 Fast as the north wind ; I could ride the Nightmare
 Even in her wildest rage, and shoe her after
 Like your most cunning War-smith : I can row
 Sleeker than swallow skims, and round my boat
 Run outside on the slippery oars at play :
 What think'st of Gorm the Sea-king, now ?

TURKETUL. Nought worse !
 Come, let us have a spice of thy perfections,
 Knight of the Nine Accomplishments !

GORM. O joy !
 I combat, dauntless hero, one of the gods,
 Even mighty Thor, the thunderer's self, in thee !

TURKETUL. Thou art more like the Spirit of Evil, Lok,
 After thy pagan creed !—Impious, I'll teach thee
 Some reverence to thy gods, false though they be !

[*They fight.*]

*Enter EGIL with Saxons, FRODA with Danes, who pause in
 conflict to admire the single combat.*

Danes. The Dane ! the Sea-king ! lightning-sworded
 Gorm !

Saxons. The chancellor, and his iron mace !—the Saxon !—

FRODA. Who would have thought the Wild Bull could
 so wheel him,
 Supple-back'd as the serpent ?

EGIL. Or the serpent
 Raise him upon his footless coils as firm,
 To dart a blow, as the wild bull can stand ?

Danes and Saxons. Gorm ! Gorm !—Turketul ! Turketul !
—Now !—

EGIL and FRODA. Well fought ! fair trial !—Southron
against Norman !—

EGIL. There is the blow from both that must end one !—
[GORM *crashes down.*

TURKETUL. Fell, laugh'd, and died !—he made a
goodly end !

FRODA. The yellow-footed bird will long bewail
Him who purveyed her many a feast,—brave Gorm !
[*General combat ; the Danes driven off.*

Part of the Field, with a copse.

FERGUS wounded ; RUNILDA supporting his head on his lap.

FERGUS. Dying, dear Maiden !—dying !—weep not !—
dying !—

Ay, leaving thee for ever !—weep not, Herva !—
Nay, now I look at thee, I prithee weep ;
That tearlessness, that wide unwinking gaze,
Is kin to frenzy !—Weep girl ! I am dying !—
O righteous judgment on my faultlessness
To that good king !—death makes my sin more clear !—
O my poor gray-hair'd father !—wilt thou, Herva,
Be in my stead a child to the old man ?
Thy lips say *yes*, but have no voice !—Alas,
That comfort spoke by dying friends is none,
But disconsols the more !—I cannot soothe her !—
Maiden, the sound of struggling feet draws near :
Help ! I'll to shelter in the brake, and die
Bird-like, unseen : lift thou my heavy locks
That they touch not the tainted dust. —

(*He retires.*) Now, lay them

Carefully on my bosom, as becomes
A prince and warrior !—Let them mix with thine
Dishevell'd o'er me thus, that face to face
As in a little loving cave together,
Thou shalt alone receive my last, fond sigh !

Enter a crowd of combatants : amongst them: ETHELSTAN
and ANLAF engaged hand to hand.

ANLAF. Tyrant, lay corse and crown here at my feet !

ETHELSTAN. My life and kingdom both upon the blow !
[*He strikes, and his falchion breaks. ANLAF is rapt away
in the crowd.*

ETHELSTAN. Bare-handed, at the mercy of the Dane !
 My sword a traitor ?—half sawn through the hilts,
 To fail me when most needed !—But one moment,
 I had a victory in this grasp, and now
 Not even poor vengeance for defeat and death !—
 See what base rabble mouths yell hither at me !
 Anlaf, why com'st not thou with kingly ire
 To give me a king's fate !—nay, while there grows
 A weapon here, one life shall cost them twain :

*[Approaching the Copse, RUNILDA meets him with
 the sword of FERGUS.]*

A sword !—Heaven-dropp'd !—Salvation !—God, I thank
 thee !—

*Enter several Welsh-kin : ETHELSTAN defends himself with
 RUNILDA at his side, and before him the body of FERGUS,
 who has dragged it expiring to the King's feet. Soldiers
 driven out.*

ETHELSTAN. What Guardian Spirit art thou, that gav'st
 this sword,
 And fought'st so fiercely calm, so mute beside me ?
 For very superstition at thy air,
 They cower'd and fled !—Why buriest thy face ?

[She motions to the body of FERGUS.]

My hostage ! and my Glee-maid !—guests, and ingrates !—
 No ! may life's saviours !—Ah, young, dead defender !
 Thou hadst my heart's forgiveness ere thou died'st.—

[RUNILDA falls at his knees and embraces them.]

Poor Youth !—poor Maiden !—ill-starr'd, luckless pair !
 O what a fathomless spring of sorrow is love,
 When not of joy !—Aye, cast thee on his corse !
 I scarce can wish thee e'er rise from it more !—
 This is no time for tears or ye should have them :
 The scales are trembling with still heavier fates ;
 My sword must be thrown in, to weigh one down ! *[Exit.]*

View of the Danish Camp. Trumpets. Flight and pursuit.

Enter ANLAF and FRODA.

ANLAF. Whirl'd from him, when his life was in my
 hands,
 When,—his sword being lost,—on mine grew white
 My knuckles with strong grasp,—when to the stroke
 Tiptoe I rose,—then was I whirl'd away

By our own reeling runagates !—O rage,
Thou'lt do the office of a sword upon me,
Riving both head and heart !—See where they run :
Stop them, good Froda !—if no other way,
Smite them to earth ! there let the vile ones die,
Fit death for dastards, smother'd in the mire ?

FRODA. I'll smite !—I cannot bawl them back ;—My
lungs
Are torn to thongs !—I'm suffocate myself,
Throat-full of blood, and foam, and swelling ire ! [*Exit.*
ANLAF (*exit, crying aloud*). Rally around the Reafen '
Anlaf ! rally !
King Anlaf ! rally ! Rally around the Reafen !

The Danish Camp at Brunanburh. Assault and defence.

*Enter ANLAF and ETHELSTAN with the Reafen and
Dragon standards on opposite sides.*

ANLAF. Again, usurper !—Thanks to the Hall of Gods,
I have thee under my sword's edge again !
Robber of kingdoms ! plunderer of palaces !
Thou thief of my regalia ! who hast stepp'd
Into the jewell'd shoes which thou didst steal,
And stand'st so high in now !

ETHELSTAN. Husband thy breath ;
Scold it not all out ; thou wilt need it soon,
Whether to fight, or flee.

ANLAF. Hast thou not stolen,
Huge-handed larcener ! Northumbria from me ?
Stol'n it ?

ETHELSTAN. Say wrench'd,—for a first step to truth :
My word makes dint like thine, with less of din.

ANLAF. Doth not the violent wrench and rob at once ?

ETHELSTAN. He robs not who but wrenches his own
rights,
Where there's no law regarded, that awards them.
True, I have wrench'd Northumbria from thy grasp,
And hold it in mine own ; rob it again
Thence, if thou canst, as while my hand lay on it
Loose in Security's sleep, thou didst before.

ANLAF. It was my father Sihtric's, and so mine !

ETHELSTAN. He was my vassal,—but a vice-king o'er it.
I gave him it, and more, for wife my Sister,
Edgitha, now the fairest saint in Heaven,

Whom he, from that old hate of devils to angels,
 Divorced injuriously ; divorced his soul
 Too, from the Mother of Saints, our Christian Church,
 Whom at same time with like oaths he had spoused :
 Thus, an apostate and adulterer,
 Return'd to Danish idols, false-wed wives,
 Heaven's hand was swifter than mine own to venge me,
 Ere I could reach him he had died !

ANLAF. Thy tongue,
 Red sword of the mouth, is feebler still, I swear,
 Than that in thy faint hand.

ETHELSTAN. It drips, withal !

ANLAF. Did Anlaf spouse thy Sister or thy Church ?
 Did he divorce them ? What did Anlaf,—Anlaf ?

ETHELSTAN. Forsook no faith as vassal-king, I grant,
 But vassal-subject !—Anlaf ne'er was king,
 Except of Irish kerns and Danish pirates !—
 Anlaf, ambition-swell'd, bore him too big
 At home : and so was sent to find at large
 Without this small isle, scope for his great merits !

ANLAF. Fool, he did find it !

ETHELSTAN. Wolf-like, in the wilderness !
 Sea-wolf and land-wolf, both !—whether he prowld
 The watery waste for spoil, or denn'd himself
 In bleak Ithernia's glacial isle, and taught
 Its habitants his fierce howl !—still wolfish ever !

ANLAF. Who made him so but thou !—Turn forth a dog,
 The fondest, faithfullest, most docile creature,
 Into the foodless wild, and he returns
 A hell-hound ! his once silky coat like thine
 Shaggy as this I wear ! his bark of welcome,
 A growl, that shakes his very ribs with ire,
 Like thunder running through them, when he sees thee ;
 Now furious for thy life, which he before
 Had lost his own defending !

ETHELSTAN. Docile thou wert not,
 Nor any of thy blood ! When ye rebell'd,
 And fate of rebels made thy brother, Godfrid,
 My prisoner, I fain had call'd him guest ;
 But still his fierceness would encave itself
 Glaring in some dark corner of my Court,
 Nor could rich fare, mild looks, nor soothing words,
 Tame down the tiger in him ; no, not once,
 Soften to thankfulness or kind regard,

His anger-lighted and cold-blazing eye !
Ere four short days he fled, and perish'd savagely.
Thou art his brother both in spirit and blood !

ANLAF. For these foul taunts and scorns, thou spurious
king,

The space of a long night awaits thee !—Ay !
Even though thy falchion with miraculous power,—
A Saxon boast,—cleft Dunbar rock in twain !
'Twill be my greater glory to cleave thee,
Stone-hard of heart, and let the reptile out
That centres rancorous there !

ETHELSTAN. We've stood too long,
Like opposite cliffs that only frown defiance,
Re-echoing empty threats, and noise for noise !

ANLAF. Mountains shall meet in us !

ETHELSTAN. England and Denmark !
[*They fight. Battle joined.*]

Another part of the Camp.

Enter TURKETUL and Saxon rear-guard rushing past him.

TURKETUL. Lead up the Londoners and the men of
Mercia !

This way, stout hearts !—Your king has thrown himself
Standard-like midst the foe, ye must recover him !
The Danes are rallied, and return full roar
Like ocean from his ebb !—On ! on !—Proud Anlaf
With devilish fury, giant arrogance,
Swells both in spirit and form beyond a man,—
Threats Victory herself !—Would that the king
Had let me undertake him ! If I fell
'Twere nobody ! if the king fell, it were all ! [*Exeunt omnes.*]

Scene III.

Interior of a Danish Tent.

*Upon a buckler, supported by trestles, is laid the body of
FERGUS. CONSTANTINE, his hands locked, and
RUNILDA, sitting each side of it.*

Enter ELLISIF hastily.

ELLISIF. The camp assaulted ! Up for shame, old king !
Myself have drawn a dagger that shall give

A woman's blow,—incurable,—to the heart !
 Up ! even a man can do as much when age
 Makes him as faint of arm, if as fierce-will'd !
 Thou couldst destroy one Saxon ; one, it might be,
 Who is the life of millions !—O what a deed,
 Glorious and utilous, which a child might do,
 Seventy or seven years old, of weakest nerve,
 With its nurse-tender's needle nicely driven !
 Up, royal host ! defend thy guest—thyself—
 Save both—perchance the field.

CONSTANTINE. I care not for it—
 The pillars of earth and heaven may fall together
 On miserable me !—I care not for it—
 Would the last day were come !

ELLISIF. The last day come?
 'Tis come long since ! and daily going on
 To thousands,—all, with whom this world is ended !—
 Destruction now strides hither,—hark his step !—
 He and Confusion with her numbeless feet,
 His helpmate dear !—Faith, I'll lend her my hand
 For sake of common sex ; and who knows all
 Disorder may turn up to a steady eye ?—
 Ha ! Ethelstan !—by my presaging hopes
 And hates, this way he stumbles !—said I not,
 'Twas never in mischance too late to die ?
 Victory's crown may from the head be pluck'd
 Even as it drops there, and upon its place
 Vengeance pour out her vial !—Firm, be firm !

*Enter ANLAF, driven in by ETHELSTAN : others combating ;
 the tent overthrown.*

ETHELSTAN. Yield self or life !

ELLISIF (*striking at ETHELSTAN with her dagger*).
 Yield them both, thou to me !

[RUNILDA *rushing between, receives the blow through her
 breast.*

Baffled !—hadst thou a hundred arms and eyes,
 Thou hadst not 'scaped, but for this fond—fool—Woman !

ETHELSTAN. Take up the girl, and lay her by her lover :
 Devotedness, how beautiful thou look'st,
 Yea in the blood of thy self-sacrifice !—
 (*To TURKETUL entering*). Hath Anlaf 'scaped ?

TURKETUL.

Fled fast !

ETHELSTAN.

Pursue him, Chancellor !

But make the road smooth for his swift retreat.

[*Exit TURKETUL.*]

ELLISIF. Take off thy silent eye from me : thou see'st
Enough already what I am,—save this—
Thy brother's widow !—Edwin's !

ETHELSTAN. Waked at last !

ELLISIF. Now to the block !—You have a host of
headsmen !

ETHELSTAN. Convey her to her cell at Beverley.—
(*To ELLISIF.*) Seek there Heaven's pardon ; though such
deeds might well

Drain Mercy's fountain dry !—Hope, like myself,
Nought in this life, but leave to quit it soon !

[*Exit ELLISIF guarded.*]

(*Looking after her.*) I stand like one deserted on an isle,
That keeps the parting vessel long in view,
Till a mere sun-bright speck,—which vanishes
And tells him—hope is gone !

(*Beholding CONSTANTINE.*) My self, grown old !
Cypress, thou art the real crown of kings !—
Thy punishment is heavy, sovran neighbour,
Losing both child and realm by one sad chance ;
I give thee back this last, as some poor solace
In such a sorrow : How more glorious far
To make a king than be a king !

*Enter EDMUND, EGIL, GODERIC, and Saxons, with the
Reafen Standard.*

All fled ?

EDMUND. All, but five kings, seven yarls, and churls
by thousands,
Left on the field.

EGIL. O ay ! ay ! others, flocks of them !—
Their kindred,—eagles, ravens, hawks, kites, cormorants,—
Sure to bide with them till their bones are bleach'd !
(*Chanting.*)

Strike the harp in Triumph strain !
Fall'n the Reafen, fled the Dane !
The Dragon soars
On Victory's wing !
And farthest shores,
And latest time,
Shall tell of Saxons and their king
In ode sublime !

Long as the mountain, stream, and moor,
So long thy glory, shall endure,
O battlefield of Brunanburh !

ETHELSTAN. Thanks, noble Egil, for thy sword and song!—

Thanks every one!—But are the Cambrians fled?
The Picts? the Gael?

EGIL. Like flying crows, all wings!

ETHELSTAN. Well, slay them not, but scourge them
sharply home:

I am full king of England now, and lose
The conqueror in the father, over all!
Edmund, thou art mine heir; no other son
Shall wifeless Ethelstan e'er have but thee:
I feel swift dissolution in my blood;
Let me devote my poor remain of years
To glean the harvest of this glorious field,
Honour, and peace, and union to the Isle:
Be this my sole aim, and some solacement!

Scene closes.

HARVEST-HOME

HARVEST-HOME

WHILE on my knee within the myrtle shade
My silent lyre did stand,
Upon my shoulder, like a feather laid,
I felt a little hand.

Another, in small beauty twin to this,
Tipped the first baby string,
And greeting my fond ear with cherub kiss,
Some ouphe began to sing :

A hymn I heard this harvest morn,
From a light minstrel on a thorn,
That thrilled the very spray ;
But one big thought within his breast
Seemed to swell out his crimson vest,—
“O welcome, happy day !”

A roundelay, as bold and blithe
As bee could hum about a scythe,
I heard this harvest noon,—
“Joy to the day, so bright and warm,
Will make both hive and hamlet swarm
With merry tenants soon !”

And hear'st thou not, this harvest eve,
Winds of the greenwood how they weave
Their sighs into a song ?
The trees find tongues—“O blissful time !
Ring out, sweet village-bells, your chime,
And swing with us along !”

Hark ! how the mountain-stream doth rave,
And wave leaps headlong over wave,
Fast to the festive green,
Murmuring and making liquid brawl,
Forsooth they cannot, each and all,
Be first upon the scene !

Dreamer, wake up !—and with me hie
Thither !—Thine Elfin Genius I,
Soul of thy fitful mirth !
No sprite who mid the starry spheres
Spends all his angel time in tears
Over unhappy Earth.

Half earth is dark, but half is bright ;
If darkness thee, and the demons, delight,
Keep to thy bower still ;
There, in sad triumph, cypress-bound,
Like statue in his own fountain drowned,
Sit darkling if thou will.

Up ! up ! seclusion is selfish sin,
When such gay rites and revels begin !
See !—bright as bubble on foam,
Swift as with velvet breast the swallow
Slides thro' the air, I'm gone '—O follow,
Follow to Harvest-home !

A spurn like a beetle's, and whirr by my cheek,
I felt from a foot and a pinion sleek :
Methought o'er the stubble two gossamer plumes
Fluttered light on to the festive ground,
Yet brushing each flower for wild perfumes,
And washing betimes in the dew-filled blooms—
Their feathery points ; till at length I found,
On reaching the green, whither both were bound,
Instead of an elfin genius I,
With kindling soul and ecstatic cry,
Had but followed a broad-winged butterfly !
That Will-o'-the-wisp of the sunbright day,
Which leads little fools, led me, astray ;
Good genius still, were it gnat or gnome,
Which led me to join in a Harvest-home !

Why celebrate with song sublime
The idol rude of antique Time,
Yet praiseless of his presence be,
Unseen, ubiquitous deity ?
Why should the senseless dead alone
With flowers of sweetest scent be strown,
Which, sure, those forms as well might wreath
That fresher bloom than they, and breathe ?

Methinks our own oak-bearing land
Shelters as much of good and grand
As Greece beneath her palmiest tree,
Or thou, twice-laurelled Italy !
Why should the vagrant Muse, from home,
On mill-round tours, for ever roam ?
Why should she more a gipsy run
Bronzing herself in every sun,
Than pine immured, a pallid Nun ?
Say, Renegade ! what that scene excels,—
 Eye-brightening, heart-refreshing scene,
Which this proud Briton bosom swells,—
 Corn-yellow umbrageous England green ?
Her fleece-white downs, her quiet dells,
In which Content a cottier dwells ?
What streams with silver-shedding wave
More meadows e'er rich moisture gave ?
Who fills with healthier juice the horn—
Boy Bacchus or John Barleycorn ?
What outland forms more fair than these
Light-trooping now along the leas,
Or glancing nymph-like 'tween the trees ?
Could stouter limbs or steadier hearts,
The pith our stubborn soil imparts,—
Could such a wall of men be shown
Since Sparta razed her wall of stone,
As here drawn up in solid line
Under the flaunting alehouse sign ?
Now raise your rude chant, jocund throng !
Clear as the wild swans' clangorous song,
Which softened by the volumy air
Filling heaven's huge theatre
Falls on the senses like a hymn
Sung by ensphered Seraphim ;
And hymn it is, thanksgiving sweet
As ever ear of God did greet,
Rustic hosanna, to yon dome
Heart-poured—"Bless Heaven for our Harvest-home !"

Down the dimpled green-sward dancing
 Bursts a flaxen-headed bevy,
Bud-lipt boys and girls advancing
 Love's irregular little levy.

Rows of liquid eyes in laughter,
How they glimmer, how they quiver !
Sparkling one another after,
Like bright ripples on a river.

Tipsy band of rubious faces,
Flushed with joy's ethereal spirit,
Make your mocks and sly grimaces
At Love's self, and do not fear it !

Lo ! a fresh group, but of less green an age,
Sob'rer, yet buoyant, fill the grassy stage.
To youths and maids, whate'er some shallower sing,
The simple dance is oft a serious thing :
One arm around her, and his fingers prest
Where the heart flutters, bird-like, 'neath the breast ;
His other hand thrilling thro' every vein,
To feel her's clasp it,—moves the tremulous swain.
His delicate charge, to bear the village pride,
Sylph-light, smooth onward, floating by his side ;
What dread her smile, or his own step, to miss !
What hope her cheeks at least by chance may kiss !
So near the flower, and yet afraid to sip
Love's nectar, sparkling crimson on her lip !
Ah ! 'tis a perilous time and trial, sure,
To youth most bold and maiden most demure.
Dancing, like marriage rite, the nerves doth prove,
Joyous grave business to the deep in love !
Fraught with more perils far than I have said
To least infirm youth, least false-stepping maid,
My watch-note still, no sinister bird I sing,
The smooth-paced dance is oft a treacherous thing,
Of tripping youth, or years, maid, widow, wife,
Hurts to the heart, that never heals for life !

Unnumbered other revels, feats, and games,
Would make even Stentor hoarse to hint their names,
I pass ; yet fain had told of them, if time
Halted for it a little, like my rhyme.

Now to his restless sea-bed wends
The slow sun, gazing at our mirth,
And on his lustrous breath he sends,
Wistful, a warm farewell to earth ;

Mute blessing, which the vales and hills,
And man's deep soul, with gladness fills.
Now is the dance, like daylight, done,
Or new, with harvest-moon, begun,
Which shines bright as a silver sun,
Whose reflex, shivered by the breeze,
Seems to turn aspens all the trees,
And mirrors all the lattices.
Now beneath tented booth and shed,
Harvest his bending board has spread ;
Hither has flocked the weary throng,
In rugged order ranged along.
The patriot king of peasants there,
Crowned with his own grey-glittering hair,
Takes humbly the one high-backed chair ;
Health's bloom upon his shrivelled skin,
Shadows forth blood still fresh within.
His cheek-spots, where the coat is thin,
Show in dark threads the purpling drink,
Like blackthorn-blossoms streaked with pink ;
His small eyes aye deep wisdom wink
On each next neighbour, dumb with awe,
As he lays down old village law,
Bottomed on many an older saw.
Here he, your law, vociferous wits !
Strong Son of the Sounding Anvil sits ;
Black and sharp his eye-brow edge,
His hand smites heavily as his sledge—
At will he kindles bright discourse,
Or blows it out, with blustrous force ;
The fiery talk, with dominant clamour,
Moulds, as hot metal with his hammer :
Yet this swart, sinewy boisterer,
His wife and babe sit smiling near,
All-fairness with all-feebleness in her arms,
Safe in their innocence and their charms :
For still the bowl, each wheeling bout,
Brings more his grim good nature out :
Miraculous bowl ! that mak'st the face
Of wrinkled care as smooth as glass ;
Over the gloomiest spread'st a light,
As sunrise gilds the brow of night ;
Bowl, that dost kindle a strange beam
Of sense, in eyes without a gleam !

Bring'st the close sinner, sans discretion,
To a loud, loose-tongued, sad confession ;
But let'st betray the simply-good
Only the more their simplehood.

Hail ! hail ! hail !
The berry-brown Beer and the amber Ale !
Sure healers of woe, and deep drowners of wail !
Foaming and screaming,
Flooding and streaming,
From barrel to bowl,
Fast as rivers can roll,
From bowl unto lips,
That froth whiter than ships
When they rush thro' wild ocean,
And fling off the spray :
Clamour all, and commotion,
But gamesome and gay !

Now the laugh and the shout rises higher and higher !
Old friends and young lovers draw nigher and nigher !

All of youth's supple kin,
Frolic wilder than elves ;

While the sages proceed, undisturbed by the din,
Thro' the story or song only heard by themselves !
Alas and alas ! who, to sadden our play,
Peeps in, with her misty eyes blinking and gray,
And bids all to their pillows ! Away ! away !
Alas, it is Day !

MISCELLANEOUS POEMS

MISCELLANEOUS POEMS

THE ÆOLIAN HARP

I AM for aye, for ever, ever sighing
My voice is full of woe, as my breast is of pain ;
Like a broken-hearted lover continually dying,
I can only raise my voice to die over again !

Rude breathes the blast ? My bosom 'gins a-thrilling,
All lonely as I hang in these lyrical bowers,
And I wail as if the winds the sweet infant-buds were killing,
As if the cruel tempest did murder the flowers !

Sweet, low and soft is the light Zephyr blowing ?
Ah ! not the less I murmur, not the less I sigh ;
Sure the melancholy rushes by the wild waters growing
Are not half so full of sadness, of sorrow as I ?

But should a maid with the willow sit nigh me,
And whisper a sad love-song once over my strings,
So deeply, doubly mournful it becomes in passing by me,
That she thinks, silly maid, 'tis her death-song she sings !

WHEREFORE, UNLAURELLED BOY

WHEREFORE, unlaurelled Boy,
Whom the contemptuous Muse will not inspire,
With a sad kind of joy
Still sing'st thou to thy solitary lyre ?

The melancholy winds
Pour through unnumber'd reeds their idle woes,
And every Naiad finds
A stream to weep her sorrow as it flows.

Her sighs unto the air
The Wood-maid's native oak doth broadly tell,
And Echo's fond despair
Intelligible rocks re-syllable.

Wherefore then should not I,
Albeit no haughty Muse my heart inspire,
Fated of grief to die,
Impart it to a solitary lyre?

THE DOVE'S LONELINESS

BREAK not my loneliness, O Wanderer !
There's nothing sweet but Melancholy here.
'Mid these dim walks and grassy wynds are seen
No gaudy flowers, undarkening the green ;
No wanton bird chirrup from tree to tree,
Not a disturber of the woods but me !
Scarce in a summer doth a wild bee come
To wake my sylvan echo with his hum,
But for my weeping lullaby I have
The everlasting cadence of the wave
That falls in little breakers on the shore,
And rather seems to strive to roar, than roar.
Light Zephyr, too, spreads out his silver wings
On each green leaf and in a whisper sings
His love to every blossom in her ear,
Too low, too soft, too sweet for me to hear !
The soul of Peace breathes a wide calm around,
And hallows for her shrine this sacred spot of ground.
Her bird am I and rule the shade for her,
A timid guard and trembling minister !
My cradling palace hung amid the leaves
Of a wide-swaying beech ; a woodbine weaves,
Fine spinster of the groves, my canopy
Of purpling trellis and embroidery ;
My pendant chair, lined with the velvet green
That nature clothes her russet children in,
Moss of the silkiest thread. This is my throne
Here do I sit, queen of the woods, alone !
And as the winds come swooning through the trees,
I join my murmurs to their melodies—

Murmurs of joy, for I am pleased to find
No visitors more constant than the wind.
My heart beats high at every step you come
Nearer the bosom of my woodland home,
And blame me not, if when you turn away
I wish that to some other scenes you'd stray,
Some brighter, lovelier scenes ; these are too sad,
Too still, and deepen into deeper shade.
See ! the gay hillocks on the neighbouring shore
Nodding their tufted crowns invite thee o'er ;
The daisy winks and the pale cowslip throws
Her jealous looks ascant,—red burns the rose,—
Spare hawthorn all her glittering wealth displays,
Stars, blossoms, buds, and hangs them in the blaze
To lure thine eye, the slope as fresh and sweet
Spreads her lush carpet to entice thy feet.
Here are but weeds and a few sorry gems
Scattered upon the straggling woodbine stems,
Hoar trees and withered fern. Ah ! stranger, go !
I would not stay to make thee tremble so.
Were I a man and thou a little dove,
I would at thy least prayer at once remove.
Then, stranger, turn, and should'st thou hear me coo
From this deep-bosomed wood a hoarse adieu—
The secret satisfaction of my mind
That thou art gone and I am left behind—
Smile thou and say farewell ! The bird of Peace,
Hope, Innocence and Love and Loveliness,
Thy sweet Egeria's bird of birds doth pray
By the name best-belov'd thou'lt wend thy way
In pity of her pain. Though I know well
Thou would'st not harm me, I must tremble still ;
My heart's the home of fear ; ah ! turn thee then,
And leave me to my loneliness again !

ROBIN'S CROSS

A LITTLE cross,
To tell my loss ;
A little bed
To rest my head ;
A little tear is all I crave
Under my very little grave.

I strew thy bed
Who loved thy lays ;
The tear I shed,
The cross I raise,
With nothing more upon it than—
Here lies the Little Friend of Man !

THE DRYADS

WE Dryad Sisters exiled be
From our sweet groves in Thessaly ;
Green Tempe calls us back again
And Peneus weeps for us in vain.
But here our oracles we breathe,
And here our oaken crowns we wreath,
Or fleet along the slippery stream,
Or wander through the greenwood dim,
Or to its inmost haunts repair,
To comb our dark-green tresses there,
Or loose them to the whistling wind
And then with flowers and ivy bind.
We've danced and sung on yonder glade
Whilst Pan on his rush-organ played
And Satyr gambol'd and young Faun
Whirled us around the reeling lawn,
Till Echo, whooping under ground,
Bid us to cease our antic round,
Else she would raise the hill with noise
And spread to heaven her traitorous voice.
Then why should we for Tempe mourn,
Although we never can return ?
This torrent rolls a wave as sweet
As ever Peneus uttered yet,
This father oak which shelters me
Hath not his peer in Thessaly,
This vale as deep, as wild, as green
As Tempe is, or e'er hath been,
So like in wood and stream and air,
That oft we seem re-exiled there,
And scarce a Dryad here has flown,
But takes this Tempe for her own !

THE ENCHANTED SPRING

O'ER golden sands my waters flow,
With pearls my road is paven white,
Upon my banks sweet flowers blow,
And amber rocks direct me right.

Look in my mother-spring ; how deep
Her dark-green waters, yet how clear !
For joy the pale-eyed stars do weep
To see themselves so beauteous here.

Her pebbles all to emeralds turn,
Her mosses fine as Nereid's hair,
Bright leaps the crystal from her urn,
As pure as dew and twice as rare.

Taste of the wave, 'twill charm thy blood,
And make thy cheek out-bloom the rose,
'Twill calm thy heart and clear thy mood,
Come ! sip it freshly as it flows.

MY BOWER

My bower is in a green dell
Amid the hills so high
That angels from their huge swell
Might step into the sky.

For silence or for sorrow,
For meditation made,
E'en joy itself must borrow
A sadness from its shade.

For all adown its steep side
The antler'd oak doth grow,
And darkles o'er the dim tide
That raves and rolls below ;

The sable yew, the sere tree
That loves to sigh alone,
When deep in earth they've left thee,
And all thy friends are gone ;

The pine wrapt up in grim pall,
And elm with rooky bowers,
Stretching her arms parental
Over the feeble flowers ;

These and their leafy peers spread
Their umbrage o'er the dale,
Lending thee all thy sweet shade,
My lov'd, my lonely vale !

But down beside the rude stream
That from the rocks doth pour,
Where Echo with her shrill scream
Rewordeth back its roar,

My Bower blooms, all beauteous
With buds and blossoms fair,
That hang the head all duteous
Whilst I lie dreaming there.

The honeysuckle drooping
From off her spousal stems,
And o'er her master stooping,
Scatters her purple gems.

Pale lilac bends to kiss me
And roses to clasp my feet,
Coy violet but to bless me
Peeps from her dim retreat.

Upon my liliated pillow
Thus flower-embraced I lie,
And let the hoarse-tongued billow
Rave my loud lullaby !

While hung amid the bright flowers
And passioned by their sighs,
About the silent star-hours
My lyre's wild words arise.

Whether an elfe descending
From out the joyless moon,
And to my bower bending
Sweeps o'er her airy tune ;

Or that the vagrant night-breeze,
Poised on its viewless wings,
Whispers unto the light trees
Some sweet and amorous things,

I know not, but the words seem
At times as true and clear
As to the eye the sunbeam,
Or thunder to the ear.

Sometimes as faint and foundless,
As perishing and vain,
As senseless, though not soundless,
As haunt the dreamer's brain.

Perchance they are my wind-lyre's;
Perchance they are my own;
When Night puts out the pale fires
I only know—they're gone !

TO POETS

You, the choice minions of the proud-lit Nine
Who warble at the great Apollo's knee,
Why do you laugh at these rude lays of mine?
I seek not of your brotherhood to be !—
I do not play the public swan, nor try
To curve my proud neck on your vocal streams;
In my own little isle retreated, I
Lose myself in my waters and my dreams.
Forgetful of the world,—forgotten too !—
The cygnet of my own secluded wave,
I sing, whilst, dashing up their silver dew
For joy, the petty billows try to rave :
There is a still applause in solitude
Fitting alike my merits and my mood.

THE MAGIC MUSIC

IN my bower so bright
As I lay last night,
The moon through the fresh leaves streaming,
There were sounds i' the air,
But I could not tell where,
Nor if I were thinking or dreaming.

'Twas the sound of a lute,
 To a voice half mute,
 That sunk when I thought it was swelling
 And it came to my ears,
 As if drowned in the tears
 Of the being whose woes it was telling.

Some accents I heard
 Were like those of the bird
 Who the lee-long night is mourning;
 And some were like those
 That we hear, when the rose
 Sighs for her Zephyr's returning.

The tones were so sweet,
 I thought it most meet
 They should not be tones of gladness;
 There are notes so fine,
 That were melody mine,
 They should only belong to sadness.

And the air-creature sung,
 And the wild lute rung,
 Like the bell when a cherub is dying;
 I can tell no mo,
 But the tale was of woe,
 For the sounds were all lost in the sighing.

And still it sung on
 Till the stars were gone,
 And the sun through the dews was peeping;
 When I woke in my bow'r,
 Ev'ry leaf, ev'ry flow'r,
 Ev'ry bud, ev'ry blossom—was weeping!

THE ENCHANTED LYRE

LISTEN to the Lyre !
 Listen to the knelling of its sweet-toned ditty !
 Shrilly now as Pain resounds the various wire,
 Now as soft as Pity !
 Soft as Pity !

Will the Dreamer know,
Who upon the melancholy harp loves weeping?
Dreamer, it is I that tell the tale of woe,
Still while thou art sleeping,
Thou art sleeping.

Thrilling up the strings,
Down again to murmur of my own deep sorrow!
Raving o'er its bosom while the night-wind sings,
Silent all the morrow!
All the morrow!

The deceitful breeze
Sighing here to imitate my song doth glory,
Weetless of my woes; it cannot tell thee these.
Listen to my story!
To my story!

I was once the flower,
The all-beloved lily of this sweet, sweet valley;
Every wooing Zephyr came to this green bower
Fain and fond to dally!
Fond to dally!

I could love but one;
He had loved me ever, but the flood's green daughters
With their syren music drew the sweet youth down,
Down beneath the waters,
'Neath the waters!

In the roaring wave
Like a silly maiden did I plunge down after,
Where amid the billows I was shown my grave
With a hideous laughter!
Hideous laughter!

I was called above,
But I found no happiness in lone, lone Heaven;
So because I would not, could not cease to love,
Earthward I was driven,
I was driven!

Like a winged dream
Here amid the bowers of my youth I hover,
Wailing o'er my sorrows to the deep, chill stream
Where I lost my lover,
Lost my lover!

In his oozy bed
Coffinless he slumbers, with the wild flood rolling !
Mermen are his ringers and his dirge is dread,
Still for ever tolling !
Ever tolling !

Hearken to the knell !
Hear it through the booming of the loud-voiced billows !
Hear it how it dingles like a clear death-bell,
Underneath the willows,
'Neath the willows !

In the desert hours,
Lyrist of thy visions, all my woes repeating,
With my tears for jewels do I fill the flowers,
While the stars are fleeting,
Stars are fleeting !

Thou wilt doubt the tale,
Wilt not still believe my woes : thy harp bear token.
See, its very bosom-strings with this deep wail,
All, like mine, are broken !
Mine are broken !

THE PALACE OF RUIN

AMID the roofless walls of a gray pile,
Built long of yore,
When the huge rocks told of the giant style
Emperilled now no more,
Which Earth's large-handed children strove to raise ere-
while
From the plain up to the high cerulean floor ;
There on a crumbling mass, which once had been
Ponderous stone,
And gazing dimly on the antique scene,
His tottering hall and throne,
Now carpeted with a sweeping pall of ivy green
I saw grim Ruin sitting in thought alone.
His eye o'erlooked the ocean and the land
Well as the pile,
For a huge globe before him aye did stand
Presenting human toil,

And when he saw domes shake, or ships bilge on the strand,
Seemed the fell despot even in his heart to smile !

His wiry locks were iron-gray, or brown,
Spun from the mine,
And his hard features cast into one frown
Iron in every line !
His brow was loaden with a spiked iron crown,
And his rude sceptre swang like an iron pine.

This ever and anon upon a rock,
Iron of sound,
With listless force yet heavily he strook,
So that re-echoing round
His topple-headed palace like a forest shook
And its foundations trembled beneath the ground.

This is the blow that crumbles works of Art
After their prime,
Which continent from continent doth part,
And breaks the chain of clime,
This is the stroke we feel, deadly upon the heart,
Prostrating all to the tyrant son of Time !

AN APOLOGY

WHY tell you me to lay the cittern by
And vex no more its disobedient strings,
That every clash the soul of Sweetness wrings,
Quenching the lamp of bright Attention's eye ?
What though the tender ear of Harmony
Shrinks, as the plant draws up its leafy wings
With a fine sense of pain ! The woodman sings
High in the rocky air, as rude as I ;
Yon shepherd pipes upon a reed as shrill
As ever blew in Arcady of yore ;
They sing and play to please their passion's will,
And waste the tedious hour. I do no more !
Then leave me to my harp and to my lay,
Rebukable, yet unrebuked as they.

SONNET

TO —

THOU whom of all the beings I have seen
 I could adore most truly,—if our fate
 Had so permitted it ; but now I ween
 To love were far more cruel than to hate :
 O, had we met at some more happy date
 I might have won thee for my angel bride ;
 And thou in me hadst found a truer mate
 Than Constancy had ever known beside :
 Our bodies as our kindred souls allied ;
 I know no state of happiness more blest ;
 For thee, deserting all, I could have died,
 Or have died, all-deserted, on thy breast !
 But, fare thee well !—I know that I am one
 Condemned alike to live and die alone !

SONNET

TO THE SAME

I THOUGHT that I could ever happy be,
 Married to meditation, and my lyre,
 Charming the moments on with melody
 That fills the ear with musical desire ;
 But now far other thoughts my breast inspire ;
 I find no happiness in poesy ;
 Within my soul burns a diviner fire,
 For now my heart is full of love and Thee !
 Yet 'tis a melancholy thing to love,
 When Fate or Expectation shuts the door,
 When all the mercy I can hope, above
 Mere friendship, is thy pity,—and no more,
 For who could love a being such as me,
 Thy most unhappy son, *Fatality?*

THE WILD BEE'S TALE

WHEN the sun steps from the billow
 On the steep and stairless sky,
 "Up !" I say, and quit my pillow,
 "Bed, for many an hour, good-bye !

Swiftly to the East I turn me,
Where the world's great lustre beams,
Warm to bathe, but not to burn me,
In its radiant fount of streams.

Then unto the glittering valley,
Where Aurora strews her pearls,
With my favourite flowers to dally
Jewelled all, like princely girls !

There I hum amid the bushes,
Eating honey, as it grows,
Off the cheek of maiden blushes,
And the red lip of the rose.

In the ear of every flower
Buzzing many a secret thing,
Every bright belle of the bower
Thinks it is for her I sing.

But the valley and the river,
That go with me as I go,
Know me for a grand deceiver,
All my pretty pranks they know.

How I lulled a rose with humming
Gentle ditties in her ear,
Then into her bosom coming,
Rifled all the treasure there.

How I kissed a pair of sisters
Hanging from one parent tree,
Whilst each bud-mouth, as I kissed hers,
Called me her own little bee !

Now my Flower-gentle sighing,
To so wild a lover true,
Tells me she is just a-dying,
So I must go kiss her too.

Down the Honeysuckle bending,
As I light upon her crest,
And her silken tucker rending,
Creep I bold into her breast.

There entranced, but scarcely sleeping,
For one odorous while I lie,
But for all her woe and weeping
In a moment out I fly.

Golden-chain, with all her tresses,
Cannot bind me for an hour ;
Soon I break her amorous jesses,
And desert the drooping flower.

They may talk of happy Heaven,
Of another world of bliss ;
Were I choice and freedom given
I would ask no world but this.

Have they lawns so wide and sunny ?
Have they such sweet valleys there ?
Are their fields so full of honey ?
What care I for fields of air !

Give me Earth's rich sun and flowers,
Give me Earth's green fields and groves,
Let him fly to Eden's bowers,
He who such cold bowers loves.

O'er the broom and furze and heather,
That betuft the mountain side,
In the sweet sunshiny weather
Let me here for ever glide.

Let me o'er the woodland wander
On my wild bassooning wing,
Let me, as the streams meander,
Murmur to their murmuring.

I can dream of nothing sweeter
Under or above the moon ;
Tell me anything that's better
And I'll change my song as soon.

But if Heaven must be, I prythee,
God of woodlands, grant my prayer,
Let me bring my woodland with me,
Or find such another there !

LOVE'S DEVOTION

OH, tell ye not my lover,
Lest he perchance should sorrow at the tale,
That from the time we parted
My cheek grew pale;
Tell him not, though he left me,—for a bride
Beauteous, I own, as the bright moon above her,—
Tell him not that I died
Love-lorn and broken-hearted.

Say not how I have perished;
Oh! no, no, no,—say you not that I pined,
Because I was forsaken,
Or he unkind:
Say that for his sweet wife I ever prayed,
And that his dear, dear name I ever cherished,
Till I to sleep was laid
Where I shall never waken.

Let him not see me carried
To my cold grave: toll not the passing bell,
For he might haply sadden
To hear that knell;
I would not cost him an unhappy tear:—
But should he come, and ask—who died unmarried?
Who lies i' the white-plumed bier?—
Say 'tis some unknown maiden.

Bury me 'neath the willow
That mourns in the far corner of the green;
Amid its drooping tresses
Will not be seen
So small a tomb as mine. Garland it gay
With flowers, to hide the name above my pillow;
Then if he pass that way,
He shall not know 'tis Jessy's.

But should he learn my story,
Bid him not weep, nor my sad fate deplore,
Say that I would not have him
Think of it more:

Remind him of how pale I used to be,
 And like to die.—If he should be too sorry,
 Give him this kiss for me,
 And tell him I forgave him.

THE POET'S HOUR

OH Lord, my God ! omnipotent and wise,
 To Thee I raise my supplicating eyes ;
 To Thee, with grateful heart, I bend my knee,
 And in meek accents raise a prayer to Thee !—
 Now, oh my Father, when all Nature's dawn
 Proclaims the opening of another morn ;
 When the blest sun, in radiant glory bright,
 Dispels the solemn stillness of the night ;
 When renovated nature smiles in joy,
 And owns a God, who made not to destroy ;
 When ev'ry beast and bird combine to raise
 Their various notes of gratitude and praise ;
 I, too, with voice sincere, though numbers weak
 The mix'd emotions of my soul would speak ;
 I, too, my heart's best feelings would declare,
 And tell the humble love I cherish there.

Oh Thou ! whose bounteous spirit breathes around,
 By all is felt,—through all the earth is found ;
 Whom neither ear hath heard, nor eye can see,
 Enshrin'd in solemn, sacred mystery ;
 Who reign'st in glorious majesty above,
 Known but in mercy, seen alone in love ;
 Pure is this breath of morn, but purer still
 The heart that bends submissive to Thy will ;
 Sweet is this scene,—for, oh ! whate'er I see
 Speaks to my soul of holiness and Thee.
 It tells me, that, though sinful, frail, and weak,
 I yet may dare my *gratitude* to speak ;
 That, though my heart has bow'd at Mammon's shrine,
 It still, in *penitence*, may sue at thine ;
 That, (oh ! transcendent Mercy !) thou wilt hear,
 And, hearing, grant a trembling suppliant's prayer.
 That prayer, O God, will contrite strains prefer,
 It begs for pardon, but it begs with *fear* ;
 It sues for strength to follow and embrace
 The purest doctrines of Thy boundless grace.

Give me a spirit form'd in virtue's mould,
Itself distrusting, for religion bold;
Pure as the zephyrs that around me blow,
Desiring, longing, all thy truth to know;
Waiting in hope the bright, the blissful day,
That breaks its fetters with this form of clay;
A heart with piety and kindness warm'd,
By pity soften'd, and by goodness charm'd;
Illumined by the Sun of truth and light,
Whose rays its beacon,—pure, unfading, bright.
—A mind unmoved by sorrow's ruthless blast,
Believing, hoping, trusting to the last;
Bending submissive to Thy chast'ning rod,
While praising all Thy goodness, O my God!
Firm and unshaken 'midst temptation's lure,
Strong to oppose, though patient to endure;
And if prosperity's enlivening ray
Shall gild the progress of my earthly way,
If in my path be strew'd life's choicest flowers,
And joy and pleasure mark the passing hours,—
On Thee—my Father, may it still rely,
Still dread the glance of Thine all-piercing eye;
May neither pride corrupt, nor vice ensnare,
Nor vain conceit e'er reign ungovern'd there.
And when my God, my Father, and my Friend,
My fleeting days approach their destined end,—
When earth and all its scenes shall fade away
Before the prospect of eternal day,—
When all its joys recede before my sight,
Then fix'd on regions of unchanging light,—
Oh! gently stay at last my passing breath,
And lead me calmly through the gates of death;
Then bid my 'raptured spirit soar on high,
To sing Hosannahs in its native sky;
And tune on golden harps its Maker's praise,
And songs of grateful love incessant raise.

AILEEN ASTORE ;

OR, THE GLEN OF THE GRAVE

LAY me down, lay me down by the stream,
 Where the willow droops over the wave,
 And the heavy-headed daffodils dream,—
 There I'll make my last couch in the grave.

And the winds a soft chorus shall keep
 With the robin that sings me my dirge,
 While the streamlet shall lull me to sleep
 With the noise of its own little surge.

Pretty flow'rets above me shall grow,
 Breathing softly, to break not my rest ;
 And each dewy morn, as they blow,
 Drop a tear, bright and pure, on my breast !

THE MAIDEN'S GRAVE

HERE in a little cave,
 the prettiest nook of this most grassy vale,
 all amid lilies pale,
 that turn

their heads into my little vault and mourn—
 Stranger ! I have made my grave.

I am not all forgot :
 a small hoarse stream murmurs close by my pillow,
 and o'er me a green willow
 doth weep,
 still questioning the air—"Why doth she sleep,
 the girl, in this cold spot ?"

Even the very winds
 come to my cave and sigh : they often bring
 rose-leaves upon their wing
 to strew
 over my earth ; and leaves of violet blue,—
 in sooth, leaves of all kinds !

Fresh is my mossy bed :
the frequent pity of the rock falls here,
a sweet cold, silent tear !

I've heard,
sometimes, a wild and melancholy bird
Warble at my grave-head.

Read this small tablet o'er,
that holds mine epitaph on its cheek of pearl :
" Here lies a simple girl,
who died,
like a pale flower nipt in its sweet spring-tide,
ere it had bloomed."—No more !

A COUNTRY SUNDAY

OH hail ! thou beauteous morn, serenely bright,
Now bursting glorious from the shades of night ;
And hail, thou SUN ! whose warm and lively glow,
Diffuses joy above, around, below ;
Who flaming brightly in yon azure sky,
Proclaim'st the glory of thy God on high.
Oh ! shed thy sweetest, but most brilliant ray,
On this his sanctified and holy day ;
Through the glad land thy cheering power dispense
To warm each heart, and rouse each grateful sense.
Then let all Nature with unerring voice,
And simultaneous accents loud rejoice ;
Wave thy triumphant tops, thou forests deep,
And in sweet peace, thou murmuring waters sleep !
Ye winds be still ! but zephyrs gently bear
Your Maker's praises to the list'ning ear.
And you, ye numerous tribes, to whom 'tis given,
To breathe the vital air of gracious Heaven,
In different ways your gratitude express,
And by your joy, your great Creator bless.
But thou, 'bove all, immortal as thou art,
Oh towering Man ! now ope thine inmost heart ;
For, chief for thee, Omnipotence hath blest,
And call'd this chosen day, " a day of rest " ;
For thee allotted each returning space,
To cleanse thy soul by his redeeming grace ;
To gradual break earth's low and sordid chain,
And clasp those links that bind to Heav'n again.

AN EPITAPH

ONCE lovely, pure, and good, on earth she dwelt,
T' infuse the heav'nly peace she inly felt ;
To raise the drooping soul, to charm the heart,
And virtuous joy to all she lov'd, impart ;
While peaceful and serene, her spotless mind
No earthly passion tainted or confin'd.
But ah ! too pure in this mix'd scene to stay,
Her spirit sought to find a brighter way ;
A God of mercy view'd the struggling soul
Striving to free itself from earth's control,
Then in compassion stay'd th' unequal strife,
And burst the bonds that fasten'd it to life ;
Bid th' enraptur'd spirit soar on high,
And bloom for ever in its native sky.

ELLINORE

UPON a still and breathless night,
When Heav'n was hush'd and Earth was sleeping,
The green hills wet with dewy light,
And silver tears fresh flowerets weeping ;

Young Ellinore sped forth to meet
In the still moon-lit vale her lover ;
The turf scarce gush'd beneath her feet
As she ran up the hill and over.

Lovely and lonely vale it was,
One hollow glade of glimmering bowers,
And winding alleys smooth with moss,
The green repose of humble flowers.

A shallow stream roved through the dell,
With small discourse and rippling laughter,
 wooing the reeds :—then wept farewell !
And mourn'd and murmured ever after.

Soft mossy banks and rushy beds
Border'd this slow delaying river ;
Too perilous a place for maids
When they are seized with love's sweet fever !

Young Ellinore look'd up the glen,
 Young Ellinore look'd down the valley,
 Young Ellinore look'd homeward,—when
 A youth sprung o'er the greenwood alley.

The moonbeams kissed the sleeping trees,
 The moonbeams kissed the sleeping flowers;
 "Oh!" said the youth, "shall lips like these
 Kiss,—and not kiss such lips as ours?"

He strewed his couch of rush and reed,
 He strewed it o'er with bough and blossom,
 He lay that night upon that bed,—
 Young Ellinore lay in his bosom.

Ah! luckless night! Ah, luckless hour!
 Oh, had she loved less well, or never!
 She blooms no more, a stainless flower,—
 Young Ellinore is lost for ever!

THE CALL OF THE MORNING

VALE of the waterfalls!
 Glen of the streams!
 Wake from your slumbering!
 Wake from your dreams!

Wild sings the mountain-lark,
 Bird of the air!
 Calling the valley-birds
 Up to him there!

Sweet ring the mountain-bells
 High o'er the dale,
 Waking the little bells
 Down in the vale.

Fresh breathes the morning-wind,
 Bright looks the day,—
 Up to the heather-hills,
 Lilian, away!

SONG

I've been roaming ! I've been roaming !
Where the meadow dew is sweet,
And like a queen I'm coming
With its pearls upon my feet.

I've been roaming ! I've been roaming !
O'er red rose and lily fair,
And like a sylph I'm coming
With their blossoms in my hair.

I've been roaming ! I've been roaming !
Where the honeysuckle creeps,
And like a bee I'm coming
With its kisses on my lips.

I've been roaming ! I've been roaming !
Over hill and over plain,
And like a bird I'm coming
To my bower back again !

SONG OF THE BLUE-BELLS

SWEET blue-bells we,
Mid flowers of the lea,
The likest in hue to heaven,
Our bonnets so blue
Are tinged with the dew
That drops from the sky at Even.

Our bloom more sweet
Than dark violet,
Or tulip's purple stain,
At every return
Of the dew-breathing morn,
Grows brighter and brighter again !

The wren hath her nest at the root of a tree,
And the tufted moss is the couch of the bee,
Where rain nor cold hath power to harm her ;
The bed of the eagle is built in the sky,
And the bittern in rushes doth nightly lie ;
Then why should Lilian's bed be warmer ?

THE POETRY OF NATURE

HEAR ! hear !
How the vale-bells tinkle all around
As the sweet wind shakes them—hear !
What a wild and sylvan sound !

Hear ! hear !
How the soft waves talk beneath the bank !
And rush sighs to willow—hear !
The reed to the osier dank.

Hear ! hear !
How the blue fly hizzes in the air
With his voice in his tiny wings—hear !
He sings at his flowery fare.

Hear ! hear !
How the wood-bird murmurs in the dark,
And the distant cuckoo chimes—hear !
From the sun-cloud trills the lark.

THE INCANTATION

THE woods are sighing !
And the wild birds crying !
And loud and sorely the wild waters weep !
Dark pines are groaning !
And night winds are moaning !
And muttering thunder rumbles hoarse and deep !

Come, Sisters, come, come !
Bring the storm, and bring the rain,
Let the raving winds loose upon the swelling billows !
Down, Spirits, down, down !
Shake the oak, and split the rock,
Scream amid the dashing waves, and shriek among the
willows !

THE ROVER'S FAREWELL

FAREWELL the groves, and farewell the bowers !
Ye rocks, ye mountains, and ye streams, farewell !
Farewell the bloom and sweet breath of the flowers !
Farewell for evermore ! a long farewell !

Farewell, O Vale of fast falling water !
 Ye banks, ye bushes, and ye glades, farewell !
 Farewell, lone parent of one wayward daughter !
 Farewell forever,—a long, long farewell !
 And farewell, Lilian ! . . .

TO RHODANTHE

O NYMPH ! release me from this rich attire !
 Take off this crown thy artful fingers wove ;
 And let the wild-rose linger on the brier
 Its last, sweet days, my Love !
 For me shalt thou, with thy nice-handed care,
 Nought but the simplest wreath of myrtle twine
 Such too, high-pouring Hebe's self must wear,
 Serving my bower with wine !¹

SYREN SONGS

I. THE TEMPTATION

O STEP and try how along the smooth ocean,
 As safe as the sea-bird thou'lt wander to me !
 O step and feel how supreme the emotion,
 To tread like an elfe the green ooze of the sea !
 Come and behold the wide deep in its splendour,
 While bright shines the path from the sun to the shore,
 Come while the waves their wild freedom surrender,
 And humble their proud necks for thee to step o'er.
 Firm is the flood to thy foot, and as fleetly
 As wind shalt thou waft on its bosom secure !
 Come while the blue sky is beaming so sweetly,
 And air is so balmy, and light is so pure !
 Fear not, sweet youth !—there's no guile in these numbers,
 With me all the long summer's day shalt thou roam,
 On the sweet-rocking waves of the west,—for thy slumbers
 A couch of red coral swings light in the foam.
 Step then and try how along the broad level
 Thou'lt follow the Sun to his cave in the deep !
 O step, and join at his red evening revel
 The loud liquid chorus that lulls him to sleep !

¹ Vide Hor., Car. I., 38.

With songs I will lull thee, so dulcet, so tender,
The bee cannot murmur as soft to the rose ;
With my bright golden harp, gentle youth, I will render
Thy slumbers as calm as an Angel's repose !

Step then, O step ! and we'll tread a wild measure
As far as the sunbeams lie smooth on the main !
O step ! and try if so blissful a pleasure
Will ne'er tempt thee o'er the bright waters again !

II. THE PREVAILMENT

LISTEN Youth ! O listen, listen,
To my dittyng lyre and song !
She whose eyes so gently glisten,
Cannot will thee wrong !
O that unto thee, as me,
Deep dominion of the sea,
Did, sweet youth, belong !

'Neath the wave there is no sorrow—
Love the only pain we know !
Jocund night brings joyful morrow
To the bowers below !
At the green foot of this well,
Lies my glassy bower and cell,
Will the Mortal go ?

I will give thee green shell-armour,
Chrystal spear, and helm of gold ;
Sword of proof against the charmer,
Like a Knight of old !
Thou shalt in a chariot brave,
Roam the deep, and ride the wave—
Dar'st thou be so bold ?

O'er the wan-blue waters sliding,
What proud pleasure it will be,
Thy wild ocean-coursers guiding,
To be-lord the sea !
Down the rocky ladder steep
Winding to the wondrous deep,
Come, O come with me !

Treasures past the power of telling,
 Richly shall the deed repay
 Come ! I hear the sea-caves knelling,
 "Come ! O come away !"
 Come and boast thee to have been
 Wanderer of the sea-bed green,
 Till thy dying day !

III. THE REVELLING

QUAFF ! O quaff the coral wine,
 Prest in our sea-vintage yearly,
 Every crimson-berried vine
 Melts as lusciously and clearly ;
 Quaff ! O quaff the coral wine,
 Bower and all within are thine !

Lays of love and hymns divine,
 I will sing, thy couch attending,
 With the perfume of the wine
 The sweet breath of music blending ;
 Quaff ! O quaff the coral wine,
 Bower and all within are thine !

Thrilling soft this harp of mine,
 Strewing boughs with coral laden,
 Pouring high the crested wine ;
 I will be thy Bower-Maiden ;
 Quaff ! O quaff the coral wine,—
 Bower and all within are thine !

IV. THE LURING-ON

WHEN westering winds the ocean soothe,
 Till calm as Heaven's blue waste it be,
 How sweet to glide from smooth to smooth,
 Like halcyons of the under sea !

How brave to tread the glistening sands
 That lie in amber wreaths below :
 The twisted toil of faery hands
 Condemned to swing them to and fro !

My bright harp with its golden tongue,
Speaks sweetly thro' the lucid wave,
And says its chords need scarce be rung,
While floods so soft its bosom lave.

Broad-handed Neptune aye will beat
In milder mood this harp of mine ;
So think not, if the song be sweet,
Think not the melody is mine !

V. THE SEA-RITUAL

PRAYER unsaid, and mass unsung,
Deadman's dirge must still be rung :
Dingle-dong, the dead-bells sound !
Mermen chant his dirge around !

Wash him bloodless, smoothe him fair,
Stretch his limbs, and sleek his hair :
Dingle-dong, the dead-bells go !
Mermen swing them to and fro !

In the wormless sands shall he
Feast for no foul gluttons be :
Dingle-dong, the dead-bells chime
Mermen keep the tone and time !

We must with a tombstone brave
Shut the shark out from his grave :
Dingle-dong, the dead-bells toll !
Mermen dirgers ring his knoll !

Such a slab will we lay o'er him
All the dead shall rise before him !
Dingle-dong, the dead-bells boom ;
Mermen lay him in his tomb !

VI. THE MERMAIDENS' VESPER-HYMN

TROOP home to silent grots and caves !
Troop home ! and mimic as you go
The mournful winding of the waves
Which to their dark abysses flow.

At this sweet hour, all things beside
 In amorous pairs to covert creep ;
 The swans that brush the evening tide
 Homeward in snowy couples keep.

In his green den the murmuring seal
 Close by his sleek companion lies ;
 While singly we to bedward steal,
 And close in fruitless sleep our eyes.

In bowers of love men take their rest,
 In loveless bowers we sigh alone,
 With bosom-friends are others blest,—
 But we have none ! but we have none !

CONSOLATION

'Twas in that pleasant season, when the year
 Bursts into all the beauty of the Spring,
 I wandered by the greenwood side, to hear
 What requiem to my woe the birds could sing.
 "O wherefore com'st without thy mistress dear,
 Whose beauty lent such brightness to these bowers?"
 My heart was drowned ; I answered with a tear
 And, hope-deserted, turned me to the flowers :
 "Ah, where is she," they cried, "that lovely one !
 Who wreathed us in her hair to make thee smile?"
 Mute, I implored the stream. "O let me run
 Murmuring beside you both for many a mile !
 Bring her again to these sweet banks !" it said :—
 And so was soothed my sorrow for the dead.

HEROA

BEAUTY'S bloom is on her cheek,
 Heaven's sweet lustre in her eyes,
 Yet her lips, that blush to speak,
 Tell me the sad maiden dies !

This they tell me in mine ear,
 Sideways, like an amorous dove,
 And so soft, I scarce can hear,
 That the maiden dies for love.

So much will the sweet-one say,
 But no more !—perversely she—
 Press her warmly as I may—
 Will not say she dies for me !

PRAYER AT BURIAL

TO A HAREBELL GROWING BY A GRAVE

PRETTY flower ! mourn for me :
 I'd rather hear thee sigh
 Than friends that counterfeit a grief,
 They feel no more than I !

Pretty flower ! mourn for me :
 I'd rather have thy tear,
 Than all a hypocritic world
 Could waste upon my bier !

Pretty flower ! mourn for me :
 And dirger's time to save,
 Hang down thy little passing-bell
 And ring me to my grave !

TO MIE TIRANTE

THOU, att whose feete I waste mie soule in sighes,
 Before whose beautie mie proude hearte is meeke,
 Thou who make'st dove-like mie fierce falcon-cies,
 And pale'st the rose of mie Lancastrian cheeke
 With one colde smyle about this budded mouth :
 Oh ! that mie harmlesse vengeance I could wreake,
 On that pale rival bloome of thine !—the South
 Raves not more fell, prisoned an Aprill weeke,
 To feede on lilie-banks, than I to prey
 Some greedie minutes on that blossome whyte,
 Whose gentle ravage thou'dst too long delaie !—
 O when these Roses of our cheekes unite,
 Will't not a summer-happie season be
 If not for Englande, in sweete soothe for me !

Rogier de Derley, 1594.

THE ROVER

I'm a rover ! I'm a rover
 Of the greenwood and the glade !
 And I'll teach you to discover
 Every Beauty of the shade !

I'm a rover ! I'm a rover
 Of the woodland and the dell '
 And I know the leafy cover
 Where the maiden-roses dwell !

I'm a rover ! I'm a rover !
 Where her couch the lily keeps ;
 And I'll bring you slily over—
 You may kiss her as she sleeps !

I'm a rover ! I'm a rover !
 Where the cowslip quaffs the dew,
 Where the bee delights to hover,
 Come ! I'll choose a cup for you !

TO MY LYRE

HAST thou upon the idle branches hung,
 O Lyre ! this livelong day,
 Nor, as the sweet wind thro' the rose-leaves sung,
 Uttered one dulcet lay?—
 Come down ! and by my rival touch be rung,
 As tenderly as they !

Did not Alcæus with blood-streaming hand
 Range o'er his trembling wire,
 Stealing forth sounds more eloquently bland
 Than softness could desire :
 As if with myrtle-bough sweet Venus fanned
 His rapt Lesboan lyre?

And shall not I, that never will imbrue
 This hand except in wine ;
 My battle-field, a bed of violets blue,
 Where conquered nymphs recline ;
 Shall not I wake the soul of sweetness too,
 Thou gentle Lyre of mine?¹

¹ Vide Hor. Car. I., 32

THE LAMENT

I've heard indeed of happy those
Whom funeral winds hushed to repose,
Of showers that fell when piteous Heaven
Was forced to take what it had given,—

But nought for me will care to weep :
The fields will don their usual green,
The mountains keep their changeless mien
And every tree will toss his plumes
As brave as erst,—the day that dooms
Me to my everlasting sleep !

Above my earth the flowers will blow,
As gay, or gayer still than now !
And o'er my turf as merrily

Will roam the sun-streak'd giddy bee,
Nor wing in silence past my grave :
The bird that loves the morning rise,
Whose light soul lifts him to the skies,
Will beat the hollow heaven as loud,
While I lie moistening my shroud
With all the cruel tears I have !

No friend, no mistress dear, will come
To strew a death-flower on my tomb ;
But robin's self, from off my breast,
Will pick the dry leaves for his nest

That careless winds had carried there :
All, but the stream, compelled to mourn,
Aye since he left his parent urn,—
Will sport and smile about my bed
As joyful as I were not dead.

Neglect more hard than death to bear !

Alive, I would be loved of *One*,
I would be wept when I am gone ;
Methinks a tear from Beauty's eye
Would make me even wish to die—

To know what I have never known !
But on this pallid-cheek, a ray
Of kindred ne'er was cast away,
And as I lived most broken-hearted
So shall I die, all—all deserted,
Without one sigh—except my own !

OCCASIONED BY A "LADY" WEEPING
SHE COPIED SOME VERSES BY THE AUTHOR

ONE Angel on the sin he did record
Dropt a sweet tear and blotted out the word :
'Twere well the tears another shed this day
Had washed the sins she registered away !

COMPASSION

(WRITTEN IN A LEAFLESS BOWER AT
HON. MRS. WESTENRA'S, DECEMBER, 1826)

FAIR as the flower is, it will yet decay ;
Green as the leaf is, it will yet be sere ;
Night has a pall to wind the gaudiest day,
And Winter wraps in shrouds the loveliest year :
For those the gale mourns in loud accents drear,
The blooms that gave it sweeter breath are gone ;
Heaven's glistening eyes with many a silent tear
BewEEP the nightly burial of the sun ;
Nature herself the lifeless year deplores,
Sad Mother, laying all her children low,
From her deep heartspring grief's wild torrent pours,
Hill, vale, and desolate woodland speak her woe :
Thou too must fade like year—day—leaf—and bloom,
Pale moralist !—wilt have like mourners at thy tomb ?

HYMN TO THE SUN

FROM MS., "THE SEA-BRIDE"

BEHOLD the world's great wonder,
The Sovereign Star arise !
'Midst Ocean's sweet low thunder,
Earth's silence and the skies'.

The sea's rough slope ascending,
He steps in all his beams,
Each wave beneath him bending,
His throne of glory seems.

Of red clouds round and o'er him
His canopy is roll'd,
The broad ooze burns before him,
A field of cloth of gold.

Now strike his proud pavilion !
He mounts the blue sublime,
And throws in many a million
His wealth from clime to clime.

MEMENTO MORI :

INSCRIBED ON A TOMBSTONE

WHEN you look on my grave
And behold how they wave,—
The cypress, the yew, and the willow ;
You think 'tis the breeze
That gives motion to these,—
'Tis the laughter that's shaking my pillow !

I must laugh when I see
A poor insect like thee
Dare to pity the fate thou must own ;
Let a few seasons glide,
We may lie side by side,
And crumble to dust, bone for bone.

Go weep thine own doom !
Thou wert born for the tomb,
Thou hast lived, like myself, but to die ;
When thou pity'st my lot
Secure fool ! thou'st forgot
Thou art no more immortal than I !

TO GLORIANA

To thee, bright Lady ! whom all hearts confess
Their queen, as thou dost highly pace along,
Like the Night's pale and lovely sultaness
Walking the wonder-silent stars among !
Beyond my lowly hopes—take thou no wrong

If in a perilous vein of liberty,
 Nymph of the splendid brow and raven tress,
 This humble strain I dedicate to thee.
 Cold in thy loveliness, as that fond stone
 Which vainly emulates thy purity,
 Standing in Beauty's temple all alone,—
 Do not despise the God of Song in me ;
 Do not, because thou art, we justly own,
 Above all praise, above all homage be !

THE FAIR WARNING

TO ONE WHO LEANED OVER ME WHILST I WAS
 SEATED AT HER HARP

O LADY ! bend not over me
 Such lips, such blooming lips as those,
 Lest in my dream of ecstasy
 I might mistake them for a rose.

O Lady, stoop not near my breast,
 That bosom heaped with virgin snow,
 Lest that, perchance, it may be prest,
 Ere I myself the truth did know.

Ah ! keep that dazzling, restless arm
 Down by thine own decorous side ;
 One single kiss might break the charm
 Which now is all thy maiden pride !

Gaze not in mine with those sweet eyes,
 As if the orbs of Heaven stood near ;
 Lest thou might'st never gain those skies
 Which should be thy angelic sphere !

"MONET ANNUS"

THE snows are fled upon their watery wings,
 Greenness again returns,
 And now no more the bounty of the springs
 O'erflows their frugal urns :
 Now might the unclad Graces dance their rings,
 So warm the welkin burns !

Yet take the thought from the swift-changing year
(For simple things make wise),
Two months—and Spring was wreathing violets here,
Two more—and Summer dies.
Then will brown Autumn change her golden cheer
At Winter's freezing eyes.

But rapid suns repair the year's decay,
Spring-tide will come again,
We, when to earth our crumbling bones we lay,
Ev'n lose the mould of men.
Life has but one short lease of mortal clay,
Why not enjoy it then?

Live not so thoughtless as the miser bee,
Nor starve amid a store !
When Death shall lead thee to Destruction's sea
And push thee from the shore,
Of all thy worldly goods, but one to thee
Shall cleave—a shroud—no more !

THE SONGSTRESS

(TO A LADY WHO WOULD SING ONLY IN THE
EVENING)

LIKE the bird-minstrel, votress of the Moon,
Who will not pour her misanthropic lay
Until the night grows upward to its noon,
And the winds hymn the death-song of the day,
But silent all—in woodlands far away,
A little hermit sits within her cell
Mossy and dim, where no intruding ray
Peeps tho' the solitude she loves so well :
Like her, the sweet Enchantress of the dell,
Thou wilt not sing until the stars arise ;
And then, like her, for ever wilt thou dwell
On tender themes that drench sweet Pity's eyes.
Sure that old Samian fable sooth must be,
And some dead nightingale revives in thee !

SOLILOQUY AMONG THE TOMBS

WRITTEN IN BEDDINGTON CHURCHYARD

I STAND upon the sod must lie on me,
Ere yon red rose in odour shall expire ;
I think upon the time that soon shall be
When my soul mingles with immortal fire.

I muse on my new kindred of the tomb,
Brothers and sisters I must shortly know ;
Few, few the hours, and fleet, ere I become
One of the pale society below !

Another Sabbath, and this sacred tower
Shall, in deep words, have tolled—his course is done !
Another Moon shall look into my bower,
And weeping lucid tears, say—he is gone !

Gone, where the proud are lowly as the meek,
Where simple ones are subtle as the sage,
Gone, where the strong are feeble as the weak,
Where rank no right, power has no privilege.

Where wealth is stripped as bare as wretchedness,
And Tyranny is fettered like his slave,
Where Beauty weeps her strange unloveliness,
Where Eloquence is dumb, and Folly grave.

Six foot of common, caitiff-making earth,
Often much less, and very seldom more,
Encompasses within its narrow girth,
Him whom a world could scarce contain before !

Ev'n on a spot as small—perchance as green,—
As this where I shall rest in *un*renown,
The Conqueror of half the poles between,
Must lay himself and all his glory down.

Lone in the far Atlantic Isle he sleeps,
The modern Charlemagne, but mightier still ;
A wretched willow o'er his tombstone weeps,
And round it mourns a miserable rill.

Upon his desolate couch the Homeless Star
 Looks with a sympathetic sister eye ;
 As if she breathed these pitying words afar,
 Outcast of Earth art thou, of Heaven, I !

The Wind-God haunting that sepulchral hill,
 Pipes a wild coronach around the grave ;
 But none are there with martial voice to fill
 His own loved trumpet o'er the buried brave.

There sleeps he, most forlorn,—almost forgot,—
 In a drear Island, distant o'er the foam,
 Here shall I sleep, laid in this quiet spot,
 And find how sweet, in death itself, is Home !

Close by the foot of this gray Abbey wall,
 Where leans the buttress that is leant upon,
 (Like old companions fearing both to fall,
 Each with its shoulder props the other one :)

Here would I wish my final bed of rest,
 Tranquil and sheltry, ivy-overgrown,
 With a green pall to spread upon my breast,
 This is the spot I've fixed on as my own.

The dewy-throated nightingale sings here
 Till midnight blends complexions with the morn ;
 And robin, in his crimson stomacher,
 Sits challenging the woods on yonder thorn.

Circling around, the turret-swallow stoops
 With sweet, weak whistle to salute her young ;
 Here, from their evening feast the crows in troops,
 Come with hoarse music heavily along.

Now that her dusky robe the Night unfolds,
 Thro' its light gauze wanders the aimless fly,
 Homeward the bee her steady passage holds,
 The stumbling beetle booms him headlong by.

Now from beneath the ivy-woven cowl,
 Muffling the head of each tall pinnacle,
 With solemn whirr comes forth the moody owl,
 And flickering bat which loves the gloom as well.

How calm ! how still !—nor is the glare of day,
 Less sobered by the shadow of the pile,
 It seems to frown the sun's rude light away,
 And tempers ev'n the Moon's most pallid smile.

Sweet village church !—remote from village strife,
 Yet still to home and heart's affection near,
 If here so peaceful be the dream of life,
 How peaceful must the sleep of death be here !

O let the proud, the wealthy, and the great,
 Where huge cathedrals ope the venal choir,
 Beneath their vain mausolea lie in state,
 Give me a grave beneath the village spire !

EPIGRAM

ON BEING RALLIED BY A BEAUTIFUL WOMAN FOR
 DULNESS IN CONVERSATION

ASK me not thou, can I no thought afford
 Mirth to create or sadness to beguile ;
 Thou smil'st so sweet ere I have spoke a word,
 Why should I speak a word to make thee smile ?

THE CROSS-EXAMINATION

SILLY maiden ! tell me why
 Grows your cheek so red,
 When young Allan passes by ?
 Silly, silly maid !

Witless creature ! what is this
 Turns your cheek to pearl ?
 Has he stol'n your fancy ?—"Yes !"
 Witless, witless girl !

Simple lassie ! where and when
 Did it come to pass ?—
 "While he woo'd me in the glen"—
 Simple, simple lass !

Thoughtless fair one ! so the youth
 Vowed?—" O yes ! and sware !"
 You believed him?—" Ay, in sooth !"
 Thoughtless, thoughtless fair !

Hapless victim !—better dead
 Than love-lorn for life !—
 " Yes—but we have just been wed !"—
 Happy, happy wife !

IN AN ALBUM: VIX VOCANTE POESIA

I, LIKE the shaded nightingale, would sing
 In some far bower, amidst the woods, alone,
 With nought but the wild streamlet's murmuring
 To give my bosom-strings their plaintive tone ;
 Or the bleak winds that thro' the forest moan
 To prompt with their rude minstrelsy my lay,
 When to pale Dian on her silver throne
 My unbesought addresses I can pay.
 But expectation chills my vein of song ;
 Even the prayer of beauty or desert,
 Breathed e'er so warm, so fervently, and long,
 Freezes the well of passion at my heart !
 What then ?—I chant some worthless strain, until
 Deep-ear'd attention quickly has her fill.

A POETICAL PROBLEM

ONCE on a time, at evening hour,
 A sweet, and dewy-bosom'd Flower,
 Was cradling up to rest ;
 A Pilgrim, wandering near her bed,
 Raised, with his staff, her drooping head,
 And thus the Flower address :

" From matin-rise to moonlight hour,
 Tell me, my pearly-crested Flower,
 How many a lucid gem
 Hath left the high, cavernal air,
 To form upon thy queenly hair
 A rainbow diadem ?"

The pouting Flower looked up, and cried,
 "Hadst thou no worthier cause beside
 For rousing me from slumber?
*Half half the square, less half the truth,
 Twice halved, less half three score in sooth,
 Is half, half, half the number!"*

ANSWER TO THE ABOVE

Should a Pilgrim e'er meet on the wearisome plain
 Such a pert mathematical Flower again,
 And receive the same answer, I'll give him a rule
 Will prevent him at least from appearing a fool:
 If he muster an eye on each side of his nose,
 And the vulgar provision of fingers and toes,
 Let him add all of these; and if these will not do,
 Should he have but *two* teeth, let him add these teeth too!

ON THE DEATH OF A YOUNG GIRL

BEAUTY and Virtue crown'd thee,
 Death in thy Youth has found thee,
 Thou'rt gone to thy grave
 By the soft willow wave,
 That hums its sweet circuit around thee.

Heaven's fond tears bedew thee!
 Flowers and fresh garlands strew thee!
 A pall for thy tomb
 From her green-weaving loom
 Kind Nature will ever renew thee.

Cheerly the lark sings o'er thee,
 Light trip the elves before thee,
 Then why should we mourn
 When, so far from forlorn,
 Thou must smile at the friends who deplore thee?

TO HEROA

As the brook's song that lulls the quiet lawn,
 As meadowy music heard on mountains high,
 As cherubs' hymns sung in the ear of Dawn,
 When the entranced stars go lingering by,—

So sweet the tremulous voice of her I love !

It seems as if thy bosom, all too weak
To utter the rude murmur of a dove,
Were framed almost too delicate to speak.

Hast thou a little lyre hung in thy breast,
Thy fine heart-strings weft for its slender chords ?

Methinks, so sweetly are thy thoughts exprest,
'Tis this that makes the music of thy words !

Even in thy tones that are, or would be gay,
The sigh-swept lyre but seems at melancholy play.

THE LIGHT-HEARTED WANDERER

O'ER the valley, o'er the mountain !

By the pathway of the foam
Leading down from yonder fountain,—
Like a honey-bird, I roam !

Thro' the wild wood and the bower,

Like the golden-coated fly

Kissing ev'ry lady-flower,

As I pass her beauty by ;

Tripping round and round the blossoms

That bespeck the grassy steep,

Into all their rosy bosoms

As I run away, I peep !

O'er the meadows gaily winging

Like an idle elf I rove,

My unheeded song a-singing

To the melody I love !

A GOOD NAME LOST

"Who can see worse days than he that, yet living, doth follow at the funeral of his own reputation ?"—*Lord Verulam.*

GAYER than forest horn

As Fame's approaching trumpet sweetly blows

In young Ambition's ear ; so when its breath

Pines to an echo, far from grievous Age,

(Like Revelry deserting ruined towers)

To our forsakenness as sad it seems

As to the dying wretch his burial knell

Rung ere its time ; the sounds fleet with his soul.

THE COY MAIDEN

FROM ANACREON

AH, fly me not, beholding
 My locks are blanched by time,
 Nor yet, because your beauty
 Is blooming in its prime,
 Despise my fond caresses ;
 Behold the lilies rare,
 Crowned with the red, red roses,
 How excellent they are !

THE FREE-BOOTER

As the prey-freighted eagle cleaves the storm
 With potent wing ; while at his scream and clang,
 To warn his famished brood, the hollow hills
 Reverberate far and near ; beneath his flight
 The valley darkens, and his cloudy form
 Swims up the sward to meet him as he glides
 Into his mountain-nest : so comes Manrique
 The single fear of many a province round.
 Robber and outlaw !—a mere jot of life
 'Mid the still-standing rocks and precipices,
 He moves right upward to his craggy dome
 Scooped in the pinnacle. His horn, by times,
 Shriill-throated, splits its voice among the rocks,
 And sooty visages look out and smile !

TO MY DEAD MISTRESS

Piango la sua morte, e la mia vita.—*Petr.*

Em sonhos aquella alma me aparece,
 Que para mi foy sonho nesta vida.—*Camoens.*¹

BURIED for ever in my heart shall be
 The image of that form I once adored,
 Claspng it as a shrine on bended knee,
 To gain one smile or sweet auspicious word :
 In sooth it was more fond idolatry

¹ Her spirit hastens in my dreams to rise,
 Who was in life but as a dream to me.—*Hayley's trans.*

Than woman should accept or man accord
To aught but One—and death avenged the Lord !

Yes ; thou wert my Supreme Good—my All-wise,
Whose lightest syllable to me was law,
My acts out-went the wishes of thine eyes,
And inspiration from their glance did draw :
With a strange kind of satisfied surprise
At the swift potency of zeal, they saw
More done from love than millions do from awe.

The speech-beginning smile thy lips put on
Which ever made entreaty of command,
Ere into sweet slow words thy breath had gone—
Behold ! thy dear desire was in thy hand !
A light intelligential round me shone,
Those eyes' blue effluence, whose flash, tho' bland,
Broke on my forehead like a lightning brand !

That moment I became all mind, heart, soul,
Danger and difficulty rose in vain ;
Ev'n Destiny could scarce my deeds control,
Nor Prudence bind me in her brittle chain :
Methought I could have grasped each whirling pole,
And Earth's great axle bent or broke in twain !
For all, to Love, seem'd possible and plain.

Well that thy lowly, weak, and passionless breast,
Swelled with its own sweet feelings ! and in those
Found all its joy ; nor heaved with more unrest
Than the soft bosom of a maiden rose,
When Zephyr stoops to kiss the fringed vest ;
So pure was thy chaste bosom, that the snows
Fall darker when the wintry ice-wind blows !

Full many a time didst thou thy votary pray,
Not—not to love so well ! and many a time
Said'st thou wert but a slight, frail thing of clay,
And Heav'n would punish both for my one crime.
Ah ! me it punished, hurrying thee away,
In thy sweet blooming-hood and beauteous prime,
Translated thro' the tomb to life's last clime.

I knew—I knew it would be so ! for thou
Wert far too much of saint for this sad sphere ;
How often did I search, with pain enow,
For some small touch of earth to keep thee here !
But no !—the fatal brightness of thy brow,
The lambent glory round thy temples dear,
Told thy election to the skies was near !

That halo, glimmering from each golden braid,
The vision of thy bright immortal crown,
Too plainly to my woe-struck heart betrayed
Heaven had already writ thee Angel down !
I saw thee early for the skies arrayed
In Purity's white veil and spotless gown,
Nor Hope would help me that sad image drown.

But for this creed,—I had not at thy shrine
Bowed my idolatrous heart and stubborn knee ;
I thought thou wert so kindred to divine
'Twere no wrong piety to worship thee !
Beatitude and sanctity both thine,
What could'st thou less than a blest spirit be?—
So love of goodness bred great ill in me.

The blow that laid thee in the arms of Death,
That very night thou should'st have laid in these ;
Time's thrilling watchword that chained up thy breath,
And with mere horror thy warm cheek did freeze
To bloodless alabaster ; Conscience saith,
These are the visitations Heaven decrees
When man on earth his sole Elysium sees !

Ay me ! 'tis *true* !—I did indeed forget
Flowers of *true* bliss on earth could never bloom :
But since my worshipt star of beauty set,
My joy is woe, my glory is in gloom.
Dark, noisome, dismal, with rank vapors wet,
This globe is like an universal tomb,
With doors down-leading to the caves of doom.

Fain would I choose me my small charnel-space,
Fain would I lie down blindly with the blind
Whose eyes are dust ; fain would I take my place
In the vast catacomb of all mankind.
O that in Ruin's eyes I had found grace !

That my death-warrant tedious Fate had signed,
The charter of immortal life to mind !

Then would my spirit, on empyreal wings,
Soar up to Heaven, if sin would let it soar,
And bird-like, fluttering where its sweet mate sings,
Beat for admittance at the mercy door !
If great compassion touched the King of kings,
My mate and I His goodness might adore—
One voice, one soul, one essence, evermore !

IN AN ALBUM

DAY-DREAMING one-tide, upon a sunny mountain,
When nought but the wild-birds and waterfalls were near,
Heard I a voice like the music of a fountain,
Its language as liquid, its melody as clear.

Murmuring deeply, the stream methought address me,
(If that which address me indeed were but a stream) :

“ Say, hath ill-fortune, or idleness, possess thee,
To lose all thy life in a melancholy dream ? ”

“ Buoyant and gladsome, my step was free as thine is,
When fresh from the life-spring of Nature,” I replied ;
“ Streamlet ! thy course will perchance be slow as mine is,
And lonely like me thro’ the valleys thou wilt glide :

Oft at a green bank delaying thy blue motion,
Thou’lt stretch thee to sleep, with a scarcely-heaving
breast ;

World-wearied, sun-sick, thou’lt wind at length to ocean,
And seek in the loss of thy being to be blest ! ”

ON THE DEATH OF TALMA

THE deathless sons of Greece have died once more,

And Rome’s proud heroes perished once again :

The world was ne’er so desolate before,

For thou the spirit wert of those great men !

Their several forms thy single nature wore

Talma !—whilst thou didst live, they could not die ;

Ere they again burst their sepulchral door,

Time may run on a whole Eternity !

Thy life contracted many a glorious age,
Thou made'st the virtues of all years thine own ;
By turns the Prince, the Warrior, and the Sage.
We had their greatness still, though they were gone.
Familiar with high thoughts thou must have soared
Where the Arch-spirits sublime look upward to the Lord !

IN AN ALBUM

HITHER the wise, the witty, and the gay,
Bid to the flow of soul—bid *me* away !
Fool in all else, in this not worldly wise
That all the world's vain wisdom I despise ;
Witty in nought, but with sardonic leer,
Mutely to scoff at half the wit I hear ;
And only gay, when those I would deride
Who think to fathom what I fain would hide ;
So rare my mood what gentleness approves,
My verse so seldom what a Lady loves,—
Why should, fair Girl ! one melancholy line
Trace my soul's darkness on this page of thine ?
This snowy page, that scares another's gloom,
To mine suggests the tablet of a tomb :
And here would I, as on that pallid stone,
Grave some sad history—perchance my own !
Like the fond bird, that in her darkling bourn
With sweet perversity, still loves to mourn,
Like her, whose pleasure all in grief appears,
My wilful strains are ever steeped in tears ;
I've talked so long familiarly with woe
That her sad language is the sole I know ;
And Hope, that erst danced forward on the wind,
I've passed long since, and left far—far behind !
Horror's black plumage ever round me waves,
I tread on skulls, I totter among graves,
A Fate pursues me, shrieking in mine ear,
That death, or something far more dread, is near ;
Nor will this Terror cease her howl, before
I rest too deep in earth to hear her more.
Ask then the gay, the witty, and the wise,
Nymph of the rosy lips and violet eyes,
For flowers or fruits of poesy, I pray,
And cast this worthless, withering Leaf away !

CUPID SLEEPING

FROM GRAY, AFTER PLATO

IN blest Idalia's realm, where forests green
Of myrtle, interweave their massy hair,
Buried chin-deep in bloom young Love was seen,
Pressing with rosy lip his rosy lair.
On the high branch his quiver hung,—the while
His darts slipt from his languid little hand ;
And o'er his scented lips, half-oped to smile,
Hovered a ceaseless bee with murmur bland.

THE FORM DIVINE

DOST thou love the blue to see
In a boundless summer sky ?
Sweeter blue I'll show to thee
In the orbit of an eye !

Roses of the purest red
Thou in every clime dost seek ;
I can show a richer bed
In a single damask cheek !

Thou wilt talk of virgin snow
Seen in icy Norway land ;
Brighter, purer, I can show
In a little virgin hand !

Still for glittering locks and gay
Thou wilt ever cite the Sun ;
Here's a simple tress—I pray,
Has he such a golden one ?

Choose each vaunted gem and flower
That must, sure ! with triumph meet ;
Come then to my Beauty's bower,
Come—and cast them at her feet !

DEPARTING MUSIC

ITS sweetness fell away
 Into the calm of night, like the last wave
 That, as the rustling wind blows smoothly o'er,
 Spreads wide and wider,—till it lose itself
 Upon the heaveless bosom of the sea.
 I listened—it was gone ! And yet methought
 Its echoes, by the ether still undrowned,
 Made some far ocean-music in mine ear :
 But no !—'twas Memory, so fond to raise
 Vain semblances of joys now sepulchred
 In the great gloomy Past, the gorge of Time—
 Then came one sound, one lost, forgotten sound,
 That vanished by me, as a midnight bird
 Fleeting upon its dark wing fast away !

TO THE MOON

AY ! thou look'st cold on me, pomp-loving Moon,
 Thy courtier stars following in bright array,
 Like some proud queen, when Meekness begs a boon,
 With upraised brow wondering what he should say,—
 Then passing in her slow and silent scorn away !
 Blank-visaged, wan, high-pacing Dame ! I come,
 No suitor to thy pity ; nor to crave
 One beam to gild the darkness of my doom,
 Not even a tear to weep me in the grave ;
 Think'st thou I'd wear thy tinsel on my pall,
 Or deck my shroud with sorry gems like thine ?
 No, let me die, unseen, unwept of all,
 Let not a dog over my ashes whine,—
 And sweep thou on thy worldly way, O Moon ! nor
 glance at mine !

THE LOST ONE

O WAS it fair ?
 Fair, kind, or pitiful to one
 Quite heart-subdued—all bravery done,
 Coyness to deep devotion turned,
 Yet pure the flame with which she burned,—

O was it fair that thou should'st come,
Strong in this weakness, to my home,
And at my most defenceless hour,
Midnight, should'st steal into my bower,
In thy triumphant beauty more
Fatal that night than e'er before ;
Angel of my destruction ! say
What drew thy demon steps that way ?
At such an hour—ungenerous youth,
'Twas a most kindless deed in sooth—
Thou know'st my woman's heart was weak,
Yet still would'st that frail moment seek,
Protective age to slumber gone,
Thou knew'st, thou knew'st I was alone,
Loose-girded, warm, suspicion-free,
My bosom full of love and thee !
At my green arbour-window I
Drank the Night's balm voluptuously
And all surrendered to my harm ;
Looked moonward, leaning on my arm,
With eyes upon that lonely star
Wandering Heaven's blue wastes afar ;
The musk-wind kist the tendrils young
That round my glimmering lattice hung,
And seemed with treacherous sighs to say,
How blissful, sweet, was that fond play !
O'er my flushed cheeks at times the air
Swept like a passing Zephyr's hair,
As it would by caresses bland
Inure me to a wanton hand :
Thou knew'st the peril of this hour,
Yet seized it—to invade my bower !

Inhuman !—and was this the time
To tempt my soul with passion's crime ?
How could'st thou, bent on virtue's death,
Woo me with such delicious breath,
That mine was held in holy fear,
Lest one faint word might 'scape my ear ?
How could'st thou, with those suppliant eyes,
Locked hands, and most unhappy sighs,
Implore me for thy sacrifice ?
Was it a tender lover's part
To plead with such entrancing art ?

Was it not merciless in thee
So fond, so gently fond to be ?
So winning, soft to speak and smile,
The guilt was hidden in the guile ;
So glorious in thy beauty's might,
That sense grew dizzy at the sight,
In voice, form, face, resistless all,
That victim Virtue needs must fall.

Ah ! in a less unguarded hour,
Thou should'st have come into my bower ;
Or come with speech, and heart and brow,
As cold and passionless as now !

MAID MARIAN'S SONG

HIE away to Sherwood Forest
Where the leaves are fresh and green !
Where my lover, jolly Robin,
Full a month and more has been.

With my bow upon my shoulder
And my arrows in my hand,
Such a merry little outlaw
Never roamed this happy land.

Both the red deer and the fallow
Chasing all the summer's day,
I make hill and dale and dingle,
Echo loud my merry lay.

And what care I for the peril ?
Sound my bugle ! and see then
How they'll bown them to defend me,
Full two hundred merry men !

HYMN TO THE OCEAN

ROLL on vasty Ocean !
Like mountains in motion
Your grey waters rise
Till they melt in the skies,

And mingle the azure of Heav'n with their own ;
'Mid the roll of her drums
Queen Amphitrite comes,
And her white horses prance
In an Apennine dance,
As they wheel her about on her hollow-shell throne !

O'er the green furrows dashing,
Thro' the heavy ooze splashing,
Down the snow-hillocks sliding,
In the vallied deeps hiding,
They mark out their flight in a pathway of foam :
The gleaming-hair'd Daughters
And Sons of the Waters,
With shout follow after,
With song and with laughter,—
Then sink all at once to their coralline home.

Foot and foot far asunder,
Wind-Gods step in thunder
From billow to billow,
Kicking up a white pillow
For him who will sleep stiff and stark on the sea !
Viewless and vapoury,
Their sea-green drapery
Down their backs flowing
Keep the gazer from knowing
Of what form, of what face, of what fashion they be !

How glorious the sight !
But no less than the Night
From her couch up-risen
Like the Moon out of prison
To roam her wild hour, her lone vigil to keep,—
O'er the still waters blazing,
Where the green stars are gazing,
As if each were an eye
Of a creature on high,
That saw such a gem as itself in the deep.

Then, then the low tolling
Of swift waves wide rolling,

And whelming and coiling ;—
Like a serpent-brood boiling
In Hell's ample cauldron, they writhe and they hiss !
SIN'S SON laughs to hear it,
And longs to be near it,
That for each whishing eddy
He might have a ship ready
To heave with a—Ho ! down the joyous abyss !

O this is the hour
To look out from the tower,
Looming dim o'er the surge,
And behold how they urge,
The rack-riders each, his blue courser afar :
How in ranks o'er the plain
Of the steadiless main,
They tilt and they joust
Till they're scattered to dust,
With a roar that rings round the wild Ocean of war !

Yet wend thee there too
When the calm sea is blue,
When the sweet summer-wave
Has forgotten to rave,
And smooth o'er its ripple the Mer-maiden glides ;
Thine eyes at the sight
Will half-close with delight,
For in rage or at rest,
Like a proud beauty's breast,
A charm with great Ocean forever abides !

EPIGRAM

WRITTEN IN AN ALBUM

DEAR Reader ! if by any chance you look
Into this tribute to this pretty book,
Forget my name, forget my verses too,
And if *you* write, I'll do the same by you !

LOVE'S LIKENESS

O, MARK yon Rose-tree! when the West
Breathed on her with too warm a zest
 She turns her cheek away;
Yet, if one moment he refrain,
She turns her cheek to him again,
 And woos him still to stay!

Is she not like a maiden coy,
Prest by some amorous-breathing boy?
 Tho' coy, she courts him too:
Winding away her slender form,
She will not have him woo so warm
 And yet will have him woo!

WINTER

THE merciful sweet influence of the South,
Cheereth the hardy winter-buds no more;
No scented breath hovers around their mouth,
No beauty in their bosoms to adore.
With icy foot the rude North treads them down,
And tells them they shall never greet the Spring,
But perish at the line of Winter's frown,
That kills the very hope of blossoming.
Thus while he fans them with his frosty wing
They scatter all their leaves upon the earth,
Not worth the hapless ruddock's gathering,
And die upon the spot that gave them birth.
How like in fate the winter-bud and I!
We live in sorrow, and in sorrow die.

ON A YOUNG TREE

GROWING NEAR A TOMB, 1812

TREE! Tree! Tree! little Tree!
Growing as thou dost grow,
Thou shalt be high as the tomb
When I shall be just as low!

While I am returning to earth,
 Earth will be turning to thee :
 Of the very same earth I am
 Thy beautiful growth may be !
 And so, neither mistress nor friend need I crave,
 But shade my own relics, and show my own grave.

ON A FOUNTAIN

O FOUNTAIN ! in whose depths of silver green
 The boughs that shade thee, beaded thick are seen,
 And the white dove, nestling their heads between,
 Drops chrystal from her wings ;
 While sparkling orbs upon thy surface swim,
 Or lie in seedy rows about thy rim,
 Spreading a shore of pearls around thy brim,
 To tempt the faery things !

Thee never doth the fiery noontide seethe,
 But here the scented violets moistly breathe,
 And oft the candid bee doth warp beneath
 Thy roof with echoing hum.

Fountain ! thy flow is melody to me !
 Thou shalt my well of inspiration be !
 And to drink deep of thy translucency
 Shall future poets come.

ON A CHILD :

(THE DAUGHTER OF HON. MRS. R. WESTENRA)

CHERUB ! that from thy own Heaven seem'st to borrow
 The lovely blue that gleams in thy young eyes,
 Why art thou here in this dim vale of sorrow,
 This earth, so far beneath thy kindred skies ?

To show what innocent, bright, happy creatures,
 Circle with smiles like thine the eternal throne,
 To tell mankind by what angelic features
 The children of Heaven's kingdom may be known.

And yet, for all the cherub that's within thee,
Sorrow may wait upon thy coming years,
Deceit may to destruction strive to win thee,
And mortal pain may cause thee human tears.

Ah! be thy woes the lightest can befall thee,
Let "Sinless" still be written on thy brow;
And when thy sister spirits heaven-ward call thee,
Be still as fit for Paradise as now.

THE ROMAN COTTAGER

VERBATIM FROM VIRGIL

HAPPY old Man!—here mid thy well-known streams
And sacred founts, shalt thou the coolness dim
Inhale!—This neighbour hedge, still pasturing
Hyblean bees on willow flowers, shall oft
With a light murmur lure thee to repose!
Here shall the woodman sing unto the winds
Beneath the lofty rock: nor shall they care,
The deep-voiced doves, nor shall the turtle cease,
From the ærial elm-tree to complain.

TO ROSELLA

BEAUTY like thine
Is a wilderness flower,
That would lose half its charms
If removed to a bower.

In its own wild vale
It grows simple and fair,
And it never can bloom
Half so lovely as there.

Then smile, sweet rose!
But to feast on that smile,
There is many a bee
Would come many a mile!

IN AN ALBUM

ON RECEIVING A SKETCH IN PENCIL FROM THE
OWNER

ONE evening, from the dewy South,
The spirit of the Rainbow came,
And with her moist vermilion mouth
Close at my lattice, breathed my name :

"Either of these rich presents chuse,"
Methought I heard the Radiance say ;
"This magic pen or pencil use
As deftly as thy talent may."

Both ! both !—too covetous I cried—
The plume flew past me on the winds !
"Enough for him," the Sylph replied,
"Whoe'er that wingéd pencil finds !"

"To a fair earthly Sylph I'll give
This other—graphic pen divine !—
Think thyself happy to receive
One sketch by it for one by thine !"

MOON AND SEA

WHILE the Moon decks herself in Neptune's glass,
And ponders o'er her image in the sea,
Her cloudy locks smoothing from off her face
That she may all as bright as Beauty be ;
It is my wont to sit upon the shore
And mark with what an even grace she glides
Her two concurrent paths of azure o'er,
One in the heavens, the other in the tides ;
Now with a transient veil her face she hides,
And Ocean blackens with a human frown,
Now her fine screen of vapour she divides,
And looks with all her light of beauty down !
Her splendid smile, wide-spreading o'er the main,
Brightens the glass she gazes at again !

POPULAR THEOLOGY!

EVEN were Hell a fable, 'twere a wise one,
 And yet it is as great a truth as Heaven,
 Tho' neither be what Mahomet would make them ;
 Ay ! and Mahometans of other Creeds ;
 Who, with their fancies ever full of Earth,
 Worship the Crescent tho' they kiss the Cross !
 How fine so-e'er these visionary scenes,
 We must still shew them with their tapestry-backs
 To the gross people with its hydra head,
 The multitude hath scarce a Cyclop's eye !
 See, with what awe, his simple mouth and ear,
 Yon pale wretch drinks up the soul-shaking sounds
 Of rack ! and scourge ! and flame ! Dire eloquence !
 And when the pitying orator allays
 His burning lips in horrid tales of Heaven,
 Bounteously poured into the caitiff's heart,
 He melts in rapture as he heard the strain
 That angels move to !

SONG OF THE SUMMER-WINDS

UP the dale and down the bourne,
 O'er the meadow swift we fly,
 Now we sing, and now we mourn,
 Now we whistle, now we sigh.

By the grassy-fringed river,
 Thro' the murmuring reeds we sweep,
 Mid the lily leaves we quiver,
 To their very hearts we creep.

Now the maiden-rose is blushing
 At the wanton things we say,
 Whilst aside her cheek we're rushing
 Like some truant bees at play.

Through the blooming groves we rustle
 Kissing every bud we pass,
 As we did it in the bustle
 Scarcely knowing how it was !

Down the glen, across the mountain,
O'er the yellow heath to roam,
Whirling round about the fountain
Till its little breakers foam.

Bending down the weeping willows
While our vesper hymn we sigh ;
Then into our rosy pillows
On our weary wings we hie.

Then of idle hours dreaming
Scarce from waking we refrain,
Moments long as ages deeming
Till we're at our play again !

THE FIGHT OF THE FORLORN

A ROMANTIC BALLAD FOUNDED ON THE HISTORY
OF IRELAND

Scene: A Cave overhanging the Shannon

BARD

SMOOTH Shan-avon ! Eirin's glory !
Of thy calm my heart would borrow ;
Still inspire my dream's sweet story,
Wake me not so soon to sorrow !

Green Shan-avon, wild and lonely !
Rave not while the Minstrel slumbers ;
Soothe his heart of sadness only
By thy melancholy numbers.

Hear the woodquest softly moaning
Thro' her honeysuckle bowers,
Hear the wind-bell sweetly toning
In the simple ear of flowers.

Son of the far distant fountain !
What rude blast awakes thy willows ?
Strong descendant of the mountain !
Why these winter-swollen billows ?

Broad Shan-avon ! Island-sund'rer !
 Now I see what burdens press thee,
 Loud Shan-avon ! streamy thund'rer !
 For thy warning voice I bless thee.

Lo ! adown the valley steering,
 With their pennons dyed for slaughter,
 Full two hundred barques appearing,
 Trample thy bright road of water !

Like a brood of swans together
 Proudly breasting thro' the rushes,
 On they come ! while each beneath her,
 Heaving high, the billow crushes.

Round the woody headland booming
 Toward my cavern-cliff they bend them ;
 Shadowy o'er the waters looming,
 This shall its dark shelter lend them.

BARD

Welcome !—Why the Red-branch waving,
 Flower of heroes ! Young Hidallan ?
 Wherefore these wild trumpets raving
 Call to arms green Inisfallan ?

CHIEF

Bard ! to battle I have bound me—
 Eirin's red-branch now must shade her—
 With my young war-breathers round me,
 To repel the bold invader !

Lochlin's roving sons of Ocean
 Crowd Shan-avon's bay with galleys ;
 Sword and brand in fiery motion
 Waste Momonia's peaceful valleys !

Prophet ! skilled in battle-omen,
 Read his fate for young Hidallan ;
 Shall we triumph o'er the foemen ?
 Shall we save green Inisfallan ?

BARD

Ai! alas my heart foretold it!
This the secret of my sadness;
O that ere thou didst unfold it
Melancholy turned to madness!

Phantoms, choakt with hideous laughter,
Nightly troop around my dwelling,
Visions dim come bleeding after,
Woe to Inisfail foretelling!

Lochlin's sons shall triumph o'er her,
Shed her own best blood upon her;
Long in chains shall she deplore her,
Long shall weep her foul dishonor!

CHIEF

Bard! to no brave chief belonging,
Hath green Eirin no defenders?
See! her sons to battle thronging,
Gael's broad-swords and Ir's bow benders!

Clan Tir-oen! Clan Tir-conel!
Atha's royal sept of Conacht!
Desmond red! and dark O'Donel!
Fierce O'More! and stout M'Donacht!

Hear the sounding spears of Tara,
On the blue shields how they rattle!
Hear the reckless Lord of Lara
Humming his short song of battle!

Ullin's Chief, the great O'Nial,
Sternly with his brown axe playing,
Mourns for the far hour of trial
And disdains this long delaying!

Gray O'Ruark's self doth chide me,
Thro' his iron beard and hoary,
Murmuring in his breast beside me—
“On to our old fields of glory!”

Red-branch crests, like roses flaming,
Toss with scorn around Hi-dallan,
Battle, blood, and death proclaiming,—
Fear'st thou still for Inisfallan?

BARD

Mighty-hearted ! mighty-handed !
Ne'er Ierné nourished braver,
Yet in vain to battle banded,
Die they may, but cannot save her.

CHIEF

Woe ! and must the green Ierné
Yield her to the Ocean-rangers ?
Say ! by skill accurst, discern ye
She must ever yield to strangers ?

BARD

Many a sun shall set in sadness,
Many a moon shall rise in mourning,
Ere a distant note of gladness
Breathe of Liberty returning.

CHIEF

Say ; should we, despite thy omen,
Onward move, to battle bending,
Shall we fall without our foemen ?
Shall we die without defending ?

BARD

Stern shall be the strife, and bloody,
Ere our fate shall own a stronger,
Streams with slaughter shall run ruddy,
Eirin's fields be green no longer !

CHIEF

Die then ! in thy cave unnoted,
Thou that would'st from battle warn us !
Tho' we may be death-devoted,
Glory's wreath shall still adorn us !

Souls of fire ! for battle sighing,
Bend your white sails round Hi-dallan :
What desire we more than dying,
If we die for Inisfallan ?

BARD

Stay ! O stay ! Shan-avon's billows
In a shroud of water wind them ;
Bloodless be their frothy pillows,
If they leave the Bard behind them.

CHIEF

Son of the same Land that bore us,
Beats thy kindred pulse so proudly ?
Strike thy war-harp then before us,
Raise the song of battle loudly !
Though forlorn and doomed to slaughter,
Chant some gay and gallant ditty,
Lest Shan-avon's murmuring water
Drown our triumph in its pity !

LAY OF THE FORLORN

Farewell to Sliev Morna,
The hills of the winds !
Where the hunters of Ullin,
Pursue the brown hinds !
Farewell to Loch Ern where the wild eagles dwell !
Farewell to Shan-avon, Shan-avon, farewell !

Farewell to bright tresses,
Farewell to bright eyes,
To the snow-covered bosoms
That heave with their sighs !
Long, long for their heroes in vain may they well,
Farewell to fair maidens, fair maidens farewell !

Farewell to our castles,
Our oak-blazing halls,
Where the red fox is prowling
Alone in the walls !
Farewell to the joys of the harp and the shell,
Farewell to Ierné, Ierné, farewell.

'Twas a wild and reckless measure,
Yet, the Minstrel's heart relenting,
Tho' he kept the tone of pleasure,
Still his mirth was like lamenting.

On they rushed to death, undaunted,
Tow'rd the van of Lochlin striding,
Where her dusky pennons flaunted,
Where her mountain ships were riding !

Furious was the fight, and deadly,
Whilst the sun in blood descended ;
When next morn he rose as redly,
Scarce the cruel fight was ended.

Long, Ierné's fate delaying,
Fell her sons in battle glorious !
Less subdued than tired of slaying,
Ev'n as victims still victorious.

There they sank, opprest by numbers,
There, where this brave fortune found him,
Every son of Eirin slumbers,
With, at least, five foes around him !

Knight, and Chief, and Bard, and Bonacht,
Died with young, with brave Hi-dallan,
Ullin's hope, and flower of Conacht,
All the pride of Innisfallan !

TO A CYPRESS TREE

O MELANCHOLY Tree ! thou who dost stand
Like a sad mourner in his sable shroud
Fast by the grave of her he loved, too proud
In his deep muffled woe, to have it scanned,
Whilst on each side of that dear space of land
(Too sacred for the common weeping crowd,)
The attendant woods, remote, on either hand,
Rave and lament in murmurs low or loud :
Wilt thou, O russet Tree ! lend me thy shade
Each noontide, when the sun inflames the sky
And glares with hideous splendour from on high
Taking the sweet green sadness from the glade ?
Wilt thou keep full with tears the floweret's eye
That weeps alone where I am lonely laid ?

A WISH

DEEP in the ocean's thundering wave
O that I sank into my grave !
 Where my knell shall be
 The groans of the sea
Tolling within some hollow cave.

O that I lay in my narrow bed
With the ocean weeds to pillow my head,
 Its foam for my shroud,
 While its lullaby loud
Deepened the sleep of the happy dead !

THE NIGHTINGALE AND THE THORN

NIGHT's curtains are falling
 Around her wide dome,
And mother-birds calling
 Young wanderers home.

The humble-bee singing
 Comes out of the rose,
And thro' the wood ringing
 His curfew, he goes.

No pipe on the mountain,
 No step in the vale,
The moon in the fountain
 Looks silent and pale :

" Hush ! hush !—the flood's daughter
 She visits by night,
Begins 'neath the water
 To mourn with delight."

" O no ! 'tis the wild-flowers
 Sighing for morn,
When the sun their green bowers
 With gold shall adorn."

" Yon grove of sweet rushes,
 'Tis they who complain !
As the wind in soft flushes
 Comes o'er them again."

“ Sweet sound !—O far sweeter
 Than these could have birth ;
 Such notes are far meeter
 For heaven than earth ! ”

“ Say, whence are those numbers ?
 Why waken they, when
 Even sorrow hath slumbers ? ”—
 Look down in the glen :

The moon on the ripples
 That wander below,
 With her tender lip tipples
 The waves as they flow :

There’s a tree bending over
 The roar of the stream,
 Where its bright sparkles hover
 Like rain in the beam :

That bower of roses,
 That sweet-brier tree,
 A Minstrel encloses
 Whom sight may not see.

“ Come down to the valley !
 Come onward a-pace !
 This willow-walled alley
 Leads up to the place ! ”

She’s gone !—Ah ! unthinking !—
 “ What’s here ?—Is it blood,
 The leaves redly-inking
 As deep as the bud ? ”

Know you not the wild story ?—
 Our villagers tell,
 That this bird hath such glory
 In wailing so well,

To deepen her sadness
 Of ecstasy born,
 In fine and fond madness
 She leans on a thorn !

RETROSPECTION

I

LIKE one far distant from his own dear land
Where Life's red fountain first began its flow,
Who turns him, wistful, ever to that hand
From whence the sweet winds of his country blow,
Yearning to see one cliff of that bright strand
Loom from the bosom of the ocean low,
And draws faint traces on the alien sand
Of the loved shapes that on his fancy grow—
Mountains high-capt with floating clouds or snow,
The brook he paced with through the vallies green,
The flocks steep-winding up the pastures slow,
The cottage glistening through its woodbine screen,—
All that his desolate heart of joy could know,
He feels it gone, yet never will forego !

II

Like him I turn me, in these lonely years,
Back towards the vision of my childhood's prime,
Fain, fain to muse, through eyes thick-glazed with tears,
On one green spot far o'er the waves of time,
There where Life's vista but span-wide appears,
Yet sunbright as a nook of Heaven's own clime ;
So the dark present the dead past endears !—
Thus oft and oft my wearied foot I stay
Wandering the world's wide wilderness forlorn,
And on the unsubstantial air portray
Long by-gone scenes, from memory unworn,
Loving them more the more heart-saddening they ;
As one from whom by death his Mistress dear was torn,
Dwells on her image more the more it makes him mourn !

LAMENT FOR LOVE

ONCE on a time, when Love was young,
While light, as his own dart, he flew ;
Where-e'er a gentle lay was sung,
Ev'n there would Love be singing too.

Where-e'er a maiden sighed, he'd sigh,
 Where-e'er she smiled, he'd smile as gay,
 Where-e'er she wept, he flew to dry
 With cherub-lips her tears away.

But now, alas ! that Love is old,
 Beauty may e'en lay down her lute,
 His wings are stiff, his heart is cold,
 He will not come and warble to't.

Or like a tottering tiny sire,
 With false voice and false-feathered wing,
 Will only to a golden lyre,
 And for a golden penny sing.

Keen-sighted grown, but deaf and lame,
 All changed from what he wont to be,—
 Vilely transformed in very name,—
 Not Cupid, but Cupidity.

Now on his bags, behind, the knave
 Cradles like silkworm in its crust,
 Content to sink into the grave,
 Might he be buried in gold dust.

Now maids must sigh, or smile, alone
 Like roses in the desert bed,
 Or bleed, on rocky bosoms thrown,
 Or die,—for Love himself is dead.

TEARS

O, I could weep myself into a stream,
 Making eternal fountains of mine eyes ;
 Would that the ancient mythologic dream,
 Were true, that peopled earth with deities,
 Then might some God, compassioning my cries,
 Turn me into an ever-weeping rill,
 Or bend me to a willow that with sighs
 The very region of the vale doth fill.
 For I have woes too mighty for such tears,
 As these I shed, but am compelled to hide ;
 Their burning bitterness mine eyeballs sears,
 And I am forced to drink the scalding tide ;
 Lest the orbs melt to brine, and leave me more
 Desolate and darkly-fortuned than before.

EPIGRAM

ON THE "POET'S CORNER" OF A LITERARY JOURNAL

STRANGE inspiration breathes o'er all who peep
Into this Corner where we Poets keep :
We sleep ourselves, and make the peepers sleep.

ZEPHYR AMONG THE FLOWERS

WHEN the bright-hair'd Morn
With her dropping horn
Blows sweet on the mountain-side,
Where the dale-queens lie
With a light foot, I
O'er their green tiaras glide.

I waken each flower
In her grassy bower,
But I do not,—dare not stay,
For I must begone
To attend the Sun
At the eastern gate of the day.

Fare thee well ! farewell !
As I leave her cell,
I can hear the young rose sigh :
And the harebell too
Bids me oft adieu,
With a tear in her dim blue eye.

As pale as the snow
Doth the lily grow
When my wild feet near her rove ;
Yet she lets me sip
Of her nectarous lip
As long and as deep as I love.

To make me her prize
Pretty primrose tries,
Kissing and clasping my feet ;
But violets cling
So fast by my wing,
That my feathers are full of them yet !

Each flower of the lea
Has a bed for me,
But I will not,—cannot stay ;
For I must begone
To attend the Sun
At the western gate of the day.

WEEP NOT, MY BRIDE !

WEEP not, my Bride ! to be my bride,
Say not that love is o'er,
That joy with maiden-hood has died,
And thou'lt be wooed no more !
I'll love thee, husband like, my bride,
And like a lover woo beside !

The roebuck loves the mountain steep,
The cushat loves the glen,
The eagle loves his craggy keep,
Her russet hedge the wren :
But dearer far I'll love my bride,
Whatever weal or woe betide !

The wild bee loves the heather-bell,
The blossom loves the tree,
The daisy loves the spring-time well,
But not as I love thee.
As I love thee, my bonnie bride,
My joy, my passion, and my pride !

When loves the breeze to sigh no more,
To wave his locks the pine,
When lovers love to die no more
For beauty such as thine,
I'll love thee then no more, my bride,
For then will Love himself have died !

EPIGRAM

ON A BLOCKHEAD WHO CENSURED A MAN OF GENIUS
FOR HIS WANT OF PRESENCE OF MIND

PRESENCE of mind he has not, I agree ;
Had'st thou his absence it were well for thee :
His thoughts are o'er the universe ! vain elf,
Thine never quit that little world,—thyself !

ON THE PICTURE OF A GIRL

SEEN IN AN ALBUM

THOU, prithee what art thou,
With thy forward-bending brow,
And thy half-uncurtained eyes !
Sweet orbs ! and yet within
Fear I much some baby sin
Nursed by Passion lies !

Ay ! such cymar of snow
Oft veils a nun I know,
And thou may'st indeed be one ;
Yet her cymar I swear
Never saw I novice wear
So unlike a nun !

True ! that's a fairer waist
Than could e'er have been embraced
Save by its own silken band ;
Yet, Maiden as thou art,
'Neath it throbs no little heart
That it may be spanned !

Pure thou as any saint,
Art, perchance, from earthly taint,
And an angel fit to be ;
But, prithee, if 'tis given
That I too should go to Heaven,
Stay thou far from me !

By the Pride angels fell,
And by Love they might as well,
 'Tis in sooth the apter way !
Sweet, then bestow thy love
On some icy Saint above,
 Not on me, I pray !

THE FALLEN STAR

A STAR is gone ! a star is gone !
 There is a blank in Heaven,
One of the cherub choir has done
 His airy course this even.

He sat upon the orb of fire
 That hung for ages there,
And lent his music to the choir
 That haunts the nightly air.

But when his thousand years were passed,
 With a cherubic sigh
He vanish'd with his car at last,
 For even cherubs die !

Hear how his angel-brothers mourn—
 The minstrels of the spheres—
Each chiming sadly in his turn
 And dropping splendid tears.

The planetary Sisters all
 Join in the fatal song,
And weep this hapless brother's fall
 Who sang with them so long.

But deepest of the choral band
 The Lunar Spirit sings,
And with a bass according hand
 Sweeps all her sullen strings.

From the deep chambers of the dome
 Where sleepless Uriel lies,
His rude harmonic thunders come
 Mingled with mighty sighs.

The thousand car-borne cherubim,
The wandering Eleven,
All join to chant the dirge of him
Who fell just now from Heaven.

THE NIGHTINGALE'S SONG

THE night wind had sung the wild flow'rs to their slumbers
And rock'd their green cradles all over the lea,
Whilst they wept, in their sleep, to the pitiful numbers
That came from the Nightingale-tree.

The Nightingale told such a tale of disaster
That it well might have pass'd for a dream with the
flow'rs,
And still as she sung, they wept faster and faster
Tears—not drop by drop—but in show'r's.

For she told—what she still loved to tell—tho' the story
Was painfully sad—e'en too sad to be sweet ;
But the bird hath in sadness a sorrowful glory,
A joy in the depth of regret.

'Twas a tale of fierce cruelty, red desperation,
That stain'd the dark forest she sung in before,
She had witness'd the deed in her green habitation—
Her green habitation no more !

'Twas of shrieks, and vain struggles, and fainting endeavour,
And cries for sweet mercy, and passion, and pray'r ;
'Twas of maidenly bosom-snow sullied for ever
With blood that had sullied it there.

She had fled far away from so guilty a dwelling
To these lonelier, lovelier, shadier bowers,
And the tale that she trembles so sweetly in telling,
She tells every night to the flowers.

If the matin-lark sung it, whilst cheering the bright sun,
The skies had wept down the gay warbler to earth ;
Then what must it be, when 'twas told to the night-sun,
In notes so far-distant from mirth ?

And so oft the sad chronicler chanted her ditty,
 The trees 'gan to sigh, and the rushes to wail,
 And the flowerets to murmur a chorus of pity
 To shew they were moved at the tale.

With weeping the moon became blind, and the duty
 Of lighting the earth, was forgot in the spheres,
 When the ocean-born sun rose, indeed in his beauty,—
 But rose in the beauty of tears !

IT IS NOT BEAUTY I DEMAND

It is not Beauty I demand,
 A crystal brow, the moon's despair,
 Nor the snow's daughter, a white hand,
 Nor mermaid's yellow pride of hair.

Tell me not of your starry eyes,
 Your lips that seem on roses fed,
 Your breasts where Cupid trembling lies,
 Nor sleeps for kissing of his bed.

A bloomy pair of vermeil cheeks.
 Like Hebe's in her ruddiest hours,
 A breath that softer music speaks
 Than summer winds a-wooing flowers.

These are but gauds ; nay, what are lips ?
 Coral beneath the ocean-stream,
 Whose brink when your adventurer sips
 Full oft he perisheth on them.

And what are cheeks but ensigns oft
 That wave hot youth to fields of blood ?
 Did Helen's breast though ne'er so soft,
 Do Greece or Ilium any good ?

Eyes can with baleful ardour burn,
 Poison can breath that erst perfumed,
 There's many a white hand holds an urn
 With lovers' hearts to dust consumed.

For crystal brows—there's naught within,
 They are but empty cells for pride ;
 He who the Syren's hair would win
 Is mostly strangled in the tide.

Give me, instead of beauty's bust,
A tender heart, a loyal mind,
Which with temptation I could trust,
Yet never linked with error find.

One in whose gentle bosom I
Could pour my secret heart of woes,
Like the care-burthened honey-fly
That hides his murmurs in the rose.

My earthly comforter ! whose love
So indefeasible might be,
That when my spirit won above
Hers could not stay for sympathy.

THE RHAPSODIST

MORNING

Do I yet press ye, O rushes ? though the light
From yonder orient point bursts in full dawn ?
Daughter of mists ! fair morning, thou dost blush
To find me yet unrisen. Lift up thy veil,
Lift up thy dewy veil, Goddess of Prime !
And smile with all thy luxury of light.
Breathe me a kiss, an earthly lover's kiss,
Such as thou gav'st the hunter-boy, and pour
The perfume of thy sighs around my bed.
This is the hour for Rhapsody. Arise !
Thou slumbering son of Song, and mount the hill.
A light thin mist hangs o'er the tumbling sea,
Hiding some grand commotion. Look ! O look !
The reddening, foaming, thundering ocean swells
With its up-springing birth. Wind, burst the cloud,
That the dread King of Glory may look forth !
He comes ! he comes ! the purple-flowing waves
Spread him a gorgeous carpet. Hail, O Sun !
Thou who dost shower thy golden benefits,
More liberal than all earth's mightiest kings !
Thou who dost fling exuberant wealth around,
And of thy rich profusion prodigal
Scatterest superfluous bounty o'er the world !
O thou ascending wonder ! thou great type

Of thy still greater cause ! thou symbol-star
Of intellectual brightness infinite !
How does the eye of rapture flow with joy
As the hills brighten, and the valleys dim
Tinge their dark verdure with thy matin ray !
My soul expands like thy magnificence
As I behold thee rise. This is the time
When the heart pants with over-teeming life
To range the blooming lawns. The dewy glade,
The tender-vested slope, the mossy bank,
The rushy-bosom'd dell are now the haunt
Of the fond Rhapsodist. The foot of ecstasy,
The light, winged foot of ecstasy springs o'er,
Nor crushes the half-waken'd flowers ; they think
It but the passing sigh of morn that bows them,
Sweeping the woodland with its soft sweet wing.
Gems of my meek ambition ! let me catch
The lustre of your radiance fresh with dew.
Waken, O rose ! O fragrant-breasted rose !
Thou ever-blushing maiden of the field,
Are thy love-dreams so sweet thou fear'st to wake ?
Ah ! thou young shrewd one ! thou dost keep thy breast
Close for yon travelling bee, whose sylvan hum
Taketh thine amorous ear. Thou smilest, ay !
But blush still deeper as you smile. Farewell !
O thou lone blue-bell, sleeping in thy nook
Under the cliff, sleeping the morn away !
Look from thine eyrie, darling of the rock !
Look at thy sister-bud, the mountain-queen,
Turning her little treasure to the sun,
Glistening and gay with dew. Hast thou no charms
In that sweet breast, that pale-blue breast of thine ?
Ope thee, fine floweret ! Delicate girl of the bank !
Pale primrose, where art thou ? Just wakening !
Thine eye half-closed and thy all-beauteous head
Still drooping on thy bosom. O, look up !
The waning moon her crystal light retires
And the red blazonry of morn begins.
The laughing plains, the yellow-coated hills,
The flashing torrent and the sun-bright lake,
The plummy forest fluttering all in sheen,
Lie like a landscape wash'd with swimming gold
Thou that believ'st, unprofitably wise,
This but the waking vision of my soul,

This but the Rhapsodist's bewildered dream,
View thou the morning-dawn—and doubt no more.

NOON

Rapt by her two gray steeds, the car of Morn
Bears her above the lark, his lofty song
Pouring from Heav'n's high crown ; yet ere the cope
Be won, she hears thickening upon her steps
The snort and tread of Phœbus' rolling wain
Torn up the road of day ; her pale-shod wheels,
Yea, even the flaxen ringlets of the Dame
Are blazing all to hindward ! On he whirls,
And scarce a chariot length between ! She burns
And chides and pants and cries ! Over his team
Hyperion bends, loud-cheering. Phlegon sweats
And Æthon ; Pyrois shakes himself to foam,
While fierce Eous at the nostril breathes
His dragon-soul, that these gray Matineers,
Their vantage ta'en, should win the goal of Noon
And bear the palm away. 'Tis won ! 'tis won !

Now turn thee from the glorious skies, so bright
The eagle blindfold soars against the sun,
To Earth's refreshing view ; yet even her robe
Is golden-green, almost too rich emblazed.
The hills and the wide woodland and the valleys
Burn with excessive day, and light o'erflows
The general horizontal globe terrene.
Now in the meads, ye shepherds, now begin
To charm the listening hours ; adown the vale
Let your sweet song go echoing. Where, I pray,
Where now's the woody Muse's worshipper ?
The fond-eye'd boy, that stealing summer's breath
Pours it within his pipe, as down the side
Of yon green hill he totters, carolling,
Each break of sunlight ? Is he in the plains,
Or basking on the napless mountain-top,
Or treading down the deep grass of the vale ?
Hark ! from the bushes, all along the stream,
Melody rises, and the small waves steal
With footless motion, underneath the sound
Murmuring to each other. Hark, again !
O silvery pipe ! the honey-sucker bends
His course about the rose with double glee,

Chiming his hum to thy sweet thrill, and now
Drawn by the fine attraction of his ear
Along the brook wings up his winding way,
Where the lost waters wander from the song.
How melancholy-wild the sylvan strain !
How sad poor Echo sighs, when to her ears
Come notes her own Narcissus breathed of old
Amid the audient hills. This eloquent air
Trembles again ! Saturn once more holds sway !
The time's Arcadian, and the Naiads thus
Moan to their streaming urns, or through their canes
Seven-tubed the Wood-maids sigh : Hark ! hark ! the sounds
Are true Parnassian, the sweet reeds of Castaly
Do blow their hollow trumpets in the downs,
Waking the tender ear of Pity. O rare !
Apollo sure doth haunt this sacred glen,
Or the Thrax bard, for see ! the lithe trees bow
Over the nook that shuts in half his soul
Who breathes it all 'mid their inclining leaves
And wins them downward. Melody hath fill'd
So full a pipe not since the shepherd-reign
Of wood-enamour'd Pan or Sylvan, whom
Echo did answer with so sweet redound
He never sang again. But who is here ?
Who but the Rhapsodist amid the shades
Swelling his oat ? Amid the sulky shades
That close the brow at the o'er-peering sun,
'Mid their green darkness deep-down in the dale
He sings moss-pillow'd, or beside the elm
Flinging its shadier horror o'er the stream
He leans, whilst the black waters at his feet
Stumble along their rocky way—he leans,
Companion of the listening nightingale,
Who cons her nightly music from his notes
Unseen herself the while and mute. Now forth,
Forth comes the boy, tuning his pastoral flute
To gayer yet as sweet-wild measures. Slow,
And turning oft and piping, up the bourne
He thrids his violet walk, invisible
With many another flower of equal hue,
But scarce so sweet as this. Sudden he stops !
To listen if the charmed valley sings.
A smother'd roar seems to attend his song,
Involuntary harmony, soft-breath'd and low,

Of winds and woods and murmuring birds within,
Of streams and reeds canorous. The dull drone
Fills up his ears of the sand-number'd swarms
That the hot grass engenders, when out-sung
The loud-wing'd bee serves but to lead the choir.

Now drooping in the fervour of the glade
The wandering minstrel turns. An odorous bank
All willow-grown descends into the stream,
And up its feet the little ripples climb
With emulous struggles, then fall back and laugh
At their own folly, and then glide away.
Hither he hies, his meadow-pipe y-slung
Carelessly from his neck, and lays him down
With head on hand beneath the willow shade,
Curtain so green, and stretches forth his limbs
Athwart the couchant grass, as down as silk
But fresh with unstol'n dew. Here may he lie
And listen to the music of the groves,
And hear the soft waves lapping on the shore,
And catch the whispers wanton Zephyr breathes
Into the ear of love-sick flowers, and mark
The fractious melody the runnel makes
Down, far a-field, where it doth spit its foam
At sturdy rocks and island tufts amidst
Its liquid path, breasting it as it rolls
And wrangles through the bottom of the dell.

Here in the bosom of the woodland he,
The Rhapsodist, doth ever love to dream
With Silence or the Muse; his summer bower
A Dryad girl doth weave, Oread or Faun,
Smooth-handed Faun, his dale or mountain lair;
Satyr doth pipe for him, when he is tired,
Amid the sounding groves, and those green Maids
(O that he still might see them, but they fled
All to their inner caves when Man unveiled
Their rites mysterious to the vulgar eye
And delicate unseen charms)—the Fountain Nuns,
Immured each one within her crystal cell,
Chant in his ears a never-ceasing song,
The still sweet burthen of their flowing wells.

Such is the joy of Noon—to him whose soul
Is fitted for Elysium. He who finds
No pleasure in the Noontide hour shall weep
For ever in the doleful shades of Acheron.

TO HELEN : ON A GIFT-RING CARELESSLY
LOST

I SENT a ring, a little band
Of emerald and ruby stone,
And bade it, sparkling on thy hand,
Tell thee sweet tales of one
Whose constant memory
Was full of loveliness and thee.

A spell was graven on its gold,
'Twas Cupid fixed without his wings,
To Helen once it would have told
More than was ever told by rings,
But now all's past and gone,
Her love is buried with that stone.

Thou shalt not see the tears that start
From eyes by thoughts like those beguiled,
Thou shalt not know the beating heart,
Ever a victim and a child,
Yes, Helen, love, believe
The heart that never could deceive.

I'll hear thy voice of melody
In the sweet whispers of the air,
I'll see the brightness of thine eye
In the blue evening's dewy star,
In crystal streams thy purity,
And look on Heaven to look on thee.

SERENADE OF A LOYAL MARTYR

SWEET in her green cell the Flower of Beauty slumbers,
Lulled by the faint breezes sighing thro' her hair ;
Sleeps she, and hears not the melancholy numbers
Breathed to my sad lute amid the lonely air ?

Down from the high cliffs the rivulet is teeming,
To wind round the willow banks that lure him from above :
O that in tears from my rocky prison streaming,
I too could glide to the bower of my love !

Ah ! where the woodbines with sleepy arms have wound her,
Opes she her eyelids at the dream of my lay,
Listening like the dove, while the fountains echo round her,
To her lost mate's call in the forests far away?

Come, then, my Bird !—for the peace thou ever bearest,
Still heaven's messenger of comfort to me,
Come !—this fond bosom, my faithfullest, my fairest !
Bleeds with its death-wound, but deeper yet for thee.

MADRIGAL

THE mountain winds are winnowing
The primrose banks along ;
From bush to brake the wild birds sing ;
The runnel-brook sweet murmuring
Thro' flowery meadows flush with Spring,
Dances to his own song.

The sun darts thro' the forest gloom,
And gilds the mossy stems ;
The gray rocks buried in the broom
Peep from their yellow-waving tomb,
And hawthorn bud and heathy bloom
Scatter the ground with gems.

See in the sharp wind, blossom-bare,
The glistening holly glows !
The wild-rose stands with virgin air
Blushing at her own beauty rare ;
And lily, still more fearful fair,
Scarce her white bosom shows.

Hark ! in each honey-bed you pass,
The burning hum of bees !
The ant-hill swarms, a rustling mass !
While in the brittle, singed grass
Dan Sol doth break the cricket's glass
And drinks the dewy lees !

To sorrel beds the conies stray,
The goats to upland sheen,
With mossy horns the wild deer play,

Twisting their heads in quiet fray,
The white lambs browse and bounce away,
The ox lies on the green.

O Ranger of the sunny hills,
How blissful it must be,
Amid the steepy rocks and rills,
Where Joy his horn of amber fills,
Fresh as from heaven the dew distils—
To live awhile with thee.

THE PROMISE

WHEN summer winds begin to woo
And hayfields to look hoar,
When cloudless skies are golden blue,
And calm the ocean shore :

When Neptune's silvery curls are thrown
Each moment on the strand,
Yet frailer than thy jetty own,
To perish in my hand :

When slumbering as the billows swing
Upon her watery slide,
The Halcyon with her silken wing
Flatters the gentle tide :

And cradled in her pearly boat
Safe-hooded from the sea,
Smooth on the Nautilus shall float
As fast as winds can flee :

Then will we to the chalky cliffs
And climb them if we may,
To see how many snow-white skiffs,
Go bounding through the bay.

To mark the broad sea-bosom swell
Scarce higher than thy breast,
And hear the deep-toned Triton shell
Hum the sweet waves to rest :

Adown the valleys deep to range,
Soft-footed as the Morn,
And hear them ring the echoing change
Of some far distant horn :

Or stand like two white angel things
Upon the mountain high,
Our rapt thoughts lifting us like wings,
Near light enough to fly !

We'll trace the stream-king to his cave
Within his grottoed halls,
To see how fast his wealth of wave
From shelve to shallow falls.

Behind her lair, with linked arms,
Mute-smiling, we will learn
By what sweet song the Naiad charms
The water from her urn.

We'll drink the fresh balm of the fields
Through moistening lips and eyes,
The dewy tears fond Nature yields
When day is born or dies.

And we will see the Sun go down
Behind the purple hills,
While gem by gem her paly crown
The Star of Beauty fills.

When larks spring up to meet the light,
When thrush and cuckoo chime,
When flocks can sleep afield by night,
Then will be straying time !

But now that frost looks diamond-jet,
And sleety north winds blow,
I will not trust my Violet
To peep from out the snow.

She shall not feel the winter pierce
With icy shafts her blood,
Nor hear his breath so shrill and fierce
Glaze up the crackling flood,

But through her window, curtained warm,
May watch him without fear
Enwreathed in shrouds his airy form
And whirl his wild career ;

Or smile to see the crystal pane
Break off his feathery dart,
That seemed to come with might and main
Right inward to her heart !

The hail may patter on the roof,
The heavy rains may pour,
But Love has made it tempest-proof
For her whom I adore !

Her cheeks shall glow, her lips shall bloom,
As if the amorous South
Had come for dalliance to her room,
And sweetness to her mouth.

Or should the rueful night-wind shriek
Her heart a moment chill,
I'll press to mine both lip and cheek
To keep them crimson still.

I'll fold her warmly to my breast,
And then, do what ye dare !
Blow, all ye winds, your bitter best,
Ye shall not reach her there !

As cheerful as a summer-bower
Her cottage trim shall smile ;
We'll cheat with tales the lingering hour,
With books as glad beguile :

Till woodbine walks and cowslip ways
Shall tempt us forth : and then
Heart-full of pleasure and of praise,
We'll range the fields again !

TO MY EGERIA

O PLACID nun !
That lov'st, immured within thy sparry cell,
Whose moist roof makes the crystal floor a well,
To count the drip-falls one by one,

Thy echoing beads and bell,
Which rings thee to perpetual orison
And keeps thy grotto awful with the knell.

Thy breathless prayer
Comes not from thy still lips, but stedfast eyes
In far-world thought fixt on the distant skies ;
Eve's solemn winds hymn for thee there,
Sweet Dawn thy matin sighs :
With tranquil breast that heaved not her soft hair
On simple mosses so much beauty lies !

Greeting thee dim
The pale moon lights with transient smile thy cave
And Purity oft comes to drink thy wave ;
Here the shy woodmaid, bending slim,
Puts off her weed to lave ;
Titania and her elfin meiny trim
Swarm here, cool shelter from the sun to crave.

Hither betimes,
With leaf-light step upon the frosted dews,
Wanders that Queen of Song the poet woos,
Like Nymph to Nun, in Celtic climes
Turned Sylph from sylvan Muse ;
O, if thy Sister hear, into his rhymes
Thou, with her spirit wild, thy calm infuse.

LAST NIGHT

I SAT with one I love last night,
She sang to me an olden strain ;
In former times it woke delight,
 Last night—but pain.

Last night we saw the stars arise,
But clouds soon dimm'd the ether blue :
And when we sought each other's eyes
 Tears dimm'd them too !

We paced alone our fav'rite walk
But paced in silence broken-hearted ;
Of old we used to smile and talk.
 Last night—we parted.

MY OWN EPITAPH

MORTAL, pass on !—leave me my desolate home !

I care not for thy sigh ; I scorn thy tear ;
To this wild spot let no intruder come,
The winds and rains of Heaven alone shall mourn me
here !

A WISH

By the far murmur of a waterfall

O let me pass my dreamy hours ! with none
Life's briary, bleeding, rough tracks to recall,
Save the great worldling, the much-travelled Sun,
That takes his highroad far above this ball
Teaching bright souls her baser paths to shun.

O thro' some vast and silent valley-hall
Let me pace on, unseen of every eye,
If the dun deer, lifting his antlers tall,
Salute not with soft gaze the passer-by.

And where the valley slopes down to the sky,
With nought beyond but the blue gulf of air,
Let me upon that floodless beach espy
A cave, where evening winds sole enter : there
Let me, with dumb thanksgiving and deep prayer,
For peace more blissful still in Eden, die !

THE SORROWS OF HOPE

UPON a sweet September day
O'er the wild hills I took my way,
When Twilight pale began to loop
Her kilted train of vapors up,
And fled before the startling horn
That shrill Alectryon blows at morn
When swift along the Orient tides,
On purpling wheel Apollo rides.

One momentary look—one gaze
Back on the cradle of my days,
Where life, and all my joys had birth—
All I have ever known on earth !
Where soon—Ah ! soon I shall return—
As thou, Stream ! to thy mountain urn !

“Farewell, dear Home ! farewell !—And now
Part we on this green upland brow,
Sweet Stream ! like thine my nameless source,
Like thine my reckless, fearless course !
But ah ! unlike in aught beside,
Each downward to our fate we glide '
Thou on thy golden road of sands,
Thro' bowery glens and blooming lands,
Shall tread thy easy path ; delaying
In every tranquil nook, and playing
With many a flower that thinks no sin
To let thee touch her fairy chin ;
While, careless, thou dost pace along
And hear'st the wild birds' woodland song
From bank to bank above thee chime,
Till soft as falls the foot of Time
Thou slide into some peaceful lake,
Where nought thy liquid trance shall break
Save the light caskets of perfume
In gay flourishes all of bloom,
That ride like little barges there
With painted sides and streamers rare ;
Or shreds that from the birchen fall,
To clothe thee in thy Autumn pall !”

“But I”— Upon that upland brow
My fate was known as well as now :
Thro' the dim tear that veiled mine eye,
Loomed my prospective Destiny ;
I saw, like Adam, 'neath my feet
A world of wo— and entered it !

For many a mile o'er hill and down,
Purple-green heath and moorland brown,
Thro' rocky pass, and river-sweep,
Up many a speckled mountain steep,
Where yellow bees from gorse alone
Were by their hum and hurry known,
As light, tho' not as gay, I flew
Till home was lost in hills of blue.
No will had I, in sooth, to roam,
My heart still clung—still clings—to home :
A slender thread, now shorn in twain,
Had drawn me gladly back again ;

And to this hour, by night and morn,
My prayers to that dear Mecca turn ;
Tho' at a far, far distant shrine
I bend this living corse of mine.

'Twas not the fear of death withheld,
That rather tempted to the field ;
'Twas not that hatred of mankind
To gloom and solitude inclined ;
Nor dread of what we all endure
Who, being proud as well as poor,
Must bear the wrongs that rich and great
Heap meanly on our mean estate ;
'Twas not that Idlesse, under name
Of learned ease or scorn of fame,
Couch-fettered me : my pride was still
To range the down and climb the hill ;
To plunge amid the roaring linn
And ride its fierce white horses in ;
To face the storm, or lightning-glance,
As the great war-steed breasts the lance :
The melancholy eagle fled
As I approached his loftiest bed ;
The fox within his lowliest den
Glared when he met my passing ken.

No ! 'twas that passion of the soul
The heart-stung bird can not control,
When robber hands her nest profane ;
She will not touch that nest again !
Some dread remembrance haunts the tree,
Each leaf suggests a misery ;
'Twas there her bliss was all enjoyed,
'Twas there her bliss was all destroyed !
Wo every place, but madness there,
The exile she may hope to bear
The agony of mute despair.

“ Array ! array the bridal feast !
Be ready paranymps and priest !
Hurry to church the swooning Maid !—
The rite is done, the blessing said :
She is the old Lord Walter's wife,
Her destiny is sealed for life !

No heir from these unfruitful bands
Shall step between us and her lands
Which should have come to us by right ;
Our uncle was a drivelling wight
To leave the Girl his treasures, when
He had as near relations men !”

“Tis well !” the red-hair’d Simon cried ;
“Now let him bear away his bride,
To some far country near the skies,
Before our smooth-cheek’d brother rise
From the sick pillow where he lies.
Let it be never told to one
Where she and her old Lord are gone.”

When full six raging months had past
I left my fever’d couch at last ;
“O Eveline ! dear cousin ! now
For thy soft hand to soothe my brow !
Thy breath, as sweet as morning air,
To pour it’s perfume on my hair !
Come with thy harp my soul to calm,
Come with thy voice, my spirit’s balm !
Sweet-murmuring like the forest dove,
Sing me the ditty that I love !”

A voice in hideous laughter broke
Close at my elbow as I spoke ;
I turned to see the fiendish one,
And saw, O Heavens ! my father’s son ;
Red Simon, with as sly a grin
As drunken Death might cast on Sin ;
Another face as blear, but older,
Looked with a death-scowl o’er his shoulder.
My brother Roland’s ; black as night
When Hell has suffocated light.

“Six months ago our Cousin wed,
While you lay groaning on your bed ;
And now is—where the Heavens can say !—
But sure some thousand miles away.
Glad was the Nymph to save from you
Her broad lands and her beauty too ;
Your state and person she abhor’d :
You—you aspire to be her lord !

Upstart ! would nothing less content ye
Than be what Nature never meant ye,—
Our better ? We, who took old wives,
With some few hundreds, and nine lives !
You, who were satisfied to be
A beggar on our charity,
E'er since our good step-father died"—

"Get up ! thou sloth !" black Roland cried ;
"Think'st thou we've nothing else to do
Than keep a lazar-house for you ?
If, as I much suspect of it,
Thine illness be not counterfeit,
To scape attendance where you should
Do something for your daily food !"

Had Heaven upon my head let fall
The fiercest thunderbolt of all,
It had not withered thus my youth !—
Age came at once : in very sooth,
By agony, in one short day,
My raven locks were turned to gray !
My heart, a gentle fire possest,
Crumbled to ashes in my breast ;
My cheek grew wan ; my sunken eye
Blazed with a fitful ecstasy ;
It seem'd, tho' scarce past manhood now,
A weight of winters on my brow
Bent me to earth ; where I have prayed
Long, long that I were lowly laid !

But to my Story : Inward pain,
Sorrow I strove to quell in vain,
The curse of reason, Memory,
That still brought back sweet thoughts to me,
By fortune now so bitter made :
The scenes where we together strayed,
The hills we ranged like two gazelles,
The banks we sought for cowslip-bells,
Or lily pale, her favorite flower,
The darkling grove, the secret bower,
The simple lays our hearts approved,
The tales of beauty that we loved,
The silent, dim, secluded vale,
Where love had breathed his ardent tale,—

All, all like bosom'd scorpions were,
That stung with native vigor there ;
In foreign lands, perchance, thought I,
These adders of the mind may die,
Or languish in their work at least ;
But mountains heaped upon my breast
Should not detain me here : If thus
Swelled thy great heart, Enceladus !
Tho' cumbrous Etna lay on thee,
Thou'dst heaved it, headlong, in the sea !

With empty scrip, but heart o'erflowing
I chose an Autumn morn for going.
Vain hope, indeed, the hope to find
In change of place a change of mind !

I pass the fortunes that befel
When first I left my parent-dell,
Whilst O, incredible to tell !
Heart-crushed, soul-sick, in poverty,
I strove to live, yet wished to die !—
A descant on those ills I waive
Which sow the rough path to the grave
That wretches such as I must tread ;
Where not a rose its blossoms shed
Over the path with thorns beset ;
To keep them from the pilgrim's feet.
O how I envied those who lay
Weltering beneath the charnel clay !
And thought—how hard it was on those
Whom Earth oppressed with all its woes,
The sad necessity—to live !—
But Heaven would send me no reprieve,
And so I struggled on, till grief
Should bring its last and best relief.

Yet strange is man !—When Death betimes
Crossed my wild path in various climes,
I still, so wayward was my heart '
Fled his blind rage and shunned his dart.
Wherefore was this ?—For all I said,
Was dying such a thing of dread ?
Was the old fable proved in me
No fable, but a verity ?

I moot it not : perchance 'twas so,
We tremble at a gulf below,
Some few dark feet ; why not at one
Beyond the sounding of the sun
Plunged to his midnight length of line,—
Eternity ? We all decline
The fearful gaze, and so might I ;
But still, a visionary tie
Bound me to earth perchance as well,
Tho' scarce preferable to Hell.

“My Eveline !—that potent name
Should still my death-ward steps reclaim.
I would not quit this mortal sphere
And think I left thee lonely here ;
I would not quit this terrene shore
Till I beheld thy face once more ;
Death were no blessing in my view
Till what and where thou art I knew ;
My grave would be no place of rest
Had'st thou one wrong to be redrest !
Gone tho' thou be, as Neptune far
Wheels his Antipodean car,
With massy Earth our feet between,
I'll see thee still, sweet Eveline !
Wed tho' thou be,—the chilling words
Pierce thro' my heart like frozen swords,—
Wed tho' thou be, despite all harms
I'll have thee yet within these arms,
And thou shalt die in them alone !—”

The words I spoke were scarce my own ;
For in an under-breathing tone
Methought I heard some Spirit say
“And she shall die in them alone !”
In its own melancholy way,
As faint as a far distant knell ;
Perchance 'twas only that small chime
The wild bee rings in some sweet bell,
And that was all which made the rhyme ;
It might be so, I cannot tell !
But yet, methought, that while my heart
Was conning o'er this bleeding part,

A shadowy form, like that I loved,
Before my dim perception moved ;
And uttered with a plaintive cry—
“ We'll meet again before we die ! ”
Then, as I stretched my arms, unkind
Drowned itself in the flowing wind.
An angel face, with curls of gold
Such as my mortal beauty wore
Would peep behind me and unfold
Some grief in sounds I heard before ;
Or 'gin a tale it left half-told
And only whisper in my ear—
“ We'll meet again before we die ! ”
In words almost too sweet to hear ;
Then vanish with a hopeless sigh.
Howe'er it was, that strong belief
Upheld me 'gainst the waves of grief
Which stormy Fate against me blew ;
I hoped, I thought, I felt, I knew
These arms which circled her before
Should press her to my heart once more !
And still whene'er my spirits fell
Came the sweet voice I knew so well—
“ We'll meet again before we die ! ”—
Then hope relumed my faded eye ;
Tho' drear the prospect now, and waste,
Life has a green for me at last !
Yet still a dark forbodement came,
A fear without a shape or name ;
Some dread sepulchral horror swept
O'er me at times ; and voices wept
A dead-wail in the haunted sky ;
Herses went slowly, sadly by ;
Tho' sweet the voice that charm'd mine ears
It seemed half choaked in blood and tears ;
Tho' lovely was the vision, still
It seemed to smile against its will,
As if a marble beauty strove
To raise the lip she could not move,
And glistening in the moonlit aisle
Wooded with a monumental smile
The wanderer of that sacred gloom
To pity her on her silent tomb !

This hope, this fear within my breast,
Yet more by that than this imprest ;
For wo and sickness well might draw
A dismal veil o'er what I saw,
Which health and pleasure would remove
When Heaven had blest me in my love.
Thus thought I ; while with steps sublime
Fancy walked o'er the hills of Time
And saw her toilsome journey close
Like the bright sun's in proud repose,
Tho' night hangs lowering o'er his bed :
I journeyed onward as I said,
While chance and strong Illusion drew
My steps from clime to clime anew,
From court to court, from scene to scene,
To find my long-lost Eveline.
And oft my credulous eye perceived,
And oft my credulous heart believed
That in each angel form which past
I found my Eveline at last :
Where grace or beauty shone, methought
Some glance of Eveline I caught ;
Among the bright, the sweet, the fair,
By turns, she seemed the loveliest there :
Beam'd from the crowd a heavenly eye ?
'Twas Eveline that past me by !—
Droop'd a wan cheek beneath a veil ?
'Twas Eveline ! but ah ! how pale !—
With bended lips yon Maiden see :
'Tis Eveline who smiles on me !—
That sylph-like form ! that gracious mien !
'Tis Eveline ! 'tis Eveline !

I passed one time the lordly towers
Which Shirewoods giant grove embowers,
Beneath whose antiquated reign
Spreads far and wide a green domain :
O'er the soft mead and velvet lawn
Range the staid deer and trotting fawn,
Or primly walk the long arcades
Like owners of those secret shades.
But on this day I ween they stept
Less stately, and the in-wood kept ;

For since the upspring of the morn
Their ears had echoed to the horn,
And the keen stag-hound's fatal yell
Toll'd in them like a passing bell.
I chanced to pass the greenwood nigh
When the loud pack came sweeping by,
With gallant hunters in their train
Who all, but one alone, were men.
She on a milk white palfrey rode
That seem'd too happy for his load :
He pranced, he foam'd, and mad with joy,
Bred the fair huntress some annoy.
In suit of sylvan green the Maid
Was like a kirtled wood-nymph clad :
A velvet helm, jet black, she wore
With snow-bright plumage nodding o'er,
And from its gold-bound rim, a veil,
Hung like a fine barred aventayle.

Along they flashed : I could not trace
The clouded features of her face,
Altho' I guessed it lovely fair ;
But as she past, two rings of hair,
Like twisted threads of matted gold
Behind each snowy ear were rolled.
My pulse throb'd high ! There was but one
With tresses wound from off the sun,
Like these !—'Tis she ! so bliss be mine !
I knew her by her locks divine !
'Tis Eveline !—And at a bound
I broke the sanctuary ground ;
One moment brought me to her side
Fleeting along the woodland wide,
For, as it seem'd, her steed had spurned
Her soft manege and hither turned
To cool the pride wherewith he burned :
The greenwood rang with shrill alarms,—
She screamed, and fell into my arms !
I clasped her fainting to my breast,
Her lips all rudely, madly, prest,
And in my greed of pleasure swore
Those lips and mine should part no more !
“ My Eveline ! my heart-sworn bride !
Look up ! behold thy love ! ” I cried,

And tore her jealous veil aside—
When oh ! what horror sealed mine eyes !
What shrieks of anguish and surprise
Burst from my lips !—A purple mole
On her left cheek o'er-ran the whole,
Staining it to the throat below,
Like red blood dropt on virgin snow—
My gorge I scarce could quell for shame
When up the breathless hunters came,
And took the lady from my knee,
And thanked me cold yet courteously
For my good help ; they had not seen
What chanced with the false Eveline ;
As courteous but as cold I bowed,
And straight withdrew me from the crowd ;
Left, doubly sad, that green domain,
To 'gin my weary search again.

Thus did my sanguine fancy draw
The form my meditation saw,
And Hope on every canvas find
The image only in my mind.
For ever foaming at my lip,
And full of her good Sister's wine,
False Fortune held her bowl to sip ;
When lo ! before the draught was mine,
Stern Disappointment with a frown
Rose like a fiend and dashed it down !

Thro' fair Hesperia's balmy clime
I journeyed in that reckless time
Which Superstition grants to Sin
For acting her loose pleasures in,
Ere her own gloomy rites begin,—
The Carnival. Fair Florence shone,
Th' imperial Druggist's classic town !
Like the great orb at going down,
Gorgeous and glorious, while the breath
Of fuming Luxury beneath
Who led the wine-flushed, panting crowd,
Sat o'er the City like a cloud ;
Dizzying the sight, tho' amber clear,
Of all in its Circean sphere.

Wandering by night to view her streets
Like marble palaces in suites,

I entered, as it were my home :
A princely Medicean dome.
Men, matrons, maids, in hoods and masks,
Plied with safe ease their amorous tasks ;
Or loitered thro' the rich saloons
To gaze at beauties or buffoons ;
Or stood in groups to laugh, and speak
What, for the din, as well were Greek.
Unless on some remoter ground
The electric spark of wit went round.

Mid all this joy, and hum, and whirl,
Who is that melancholy girl ?
Fixed on that marble block alone
She seems of kindred to the stone ;
So still, so mute, so cold withal,
Some goddess on her pedestal ?
Wo, looking at her clasped hands,
Or counting Death's slow minute-sands ?

So wrapt my thoughts I spoke aloud,
When one of the near-standing crowd ;
" Alas ! who knows not by her mien
The lovelorn lady Eveline ?
An angel from another sphere
Whom fiends by force have carried here ;
Because her maiden choice forsooth
Instead of palsied Age, was Youth ! "

No more ! my heart has long confest
Her presence whom it knows the best !
Long ere we die indeed we meet !—
I rushed, and threw me at her feet :
With up-raised arms and streaming eyes
Poured out my soul in sobs and sighs,
And broken words and gasps of joy,
Like a fond, visionary boy !
She moved not—spoke not—rooted there
As wedded to her own Despair ;
Within her mask her eyes alone
Glared at me, white, like eyes of stone ;
Nor yet her hands unlocked their clasp,
Till with a fierce convulsive grasp—
" Oh Eveline ! can this be thee ?
Can I so soon forgotten be ? "

Then rose the statued beauty, while
Her eyes betrayed a pitying smile,
And sighing like a thing of clay
Walked slow and silently away.

At once the hope my folly nursed
Her tall majestic form dispersed ;
That beauteous Grief might be a queen,
But ah ! 'tis not my Eveline !

Mocked with the tantalizing cup
So oft, I gave endeavor up,
And let it sparkle as it might
I vowed to hold temptation light ;
Tho' still, beyond my weak control,
Mine eyes at least would drink the bowl.
At length when all but Love was fled,
Hope sick and Expectation dead,
I turned me homeward, bent to seek
Some cave within a quiet creek,
Where to the hoarse, high-sounding main
I might eternally complain
Of luckless Fate. Down by the Rhine
Flowing as dark as his own wine,
I took my meditative way.
Dim Twilight in her veil of gray
Stood on the Eastern hills afar
Watching pale Vesper's beacon star ;
When by the river's lonely shore,
To lull me with its stunning roar
I paced ; nor woke me from my dream
Till broadly o'er the rippling stream
A battlemented shadow threw
Its form athwart the sullen blue.
I raised mine eyes : but to admire
A castle wrapt in sheets of fire,
Yet standing hurtless in the blaze ;
The bloodred sun's departing rays
O'er glistening spire and turret thrown
To porphyry turned the gray hill-stone :
Above, the yellow woods depended,
As, drenched in rich Pactolus' waves,
They hung with amber-dropping leaves,
Or Autumn came ere Summer ended,

And like the Phrygian King of old
Touched all its living green with gold.

Lost in the splendor of the sight
I gazed upon the vision bright,
And stood in long abstraction here ;
When sweetly, faintly, on my ear,
O'er the reflecting waters stole
A strain deep-drawn from Passion's soul ;
Melody that the Saints might sigh
Seeing a sister-spirit die.
It ceased—it came again—it fell
Once more, as if by pause and swell,
Yet more by its appealing tone,
'Twould waken some compassion.

Roused from the dark abyss of thought
When now the shades began to fall,
I glanced around. My vision caught
Some lustre on the castle wall,
That gleamed and vanished instantly,
Advancing,—as it seemed to be,
A silver veil wide-streaming, and
The moonlight splendor of a hand,
Flashed forth again most gloriously
Brief signal of approach to me.
Forward I stole, and just beneath
A lattice stood as still as Death
When to a lute that gently rung
A low sweet voice this ditty sung.

“ The Moon is bright, and calm the river-wave,
The boat sits rocking on the flood below,
The Baron sleeps, and with her Lover brave
O'er the broad water would the Maiden go.

“ ‘ If Pity with thy gentle spirit dwell ’—
Thus spoke the Maiden to her doubting Knight,—
‘ If courage in thy noble bosom swell,
Thou wilt not leave me in this hapless plight ! ’

“ The Maiden dons her sandal and her hood,
Adown the silken ladder doth she glide ;
The Knight unmoors the cradle of the flood,
And both row safely o'er the Summer tide ! ”

“The very voice ! the very lay !
My Eveline ! O haste away !
Descend ! descend ! my bride ! my wife !
The pride, the passion of my life !”
Ere twenty ripples kissed the shore
We ferried the deep current o’er,
And like two doves that seek their nest
Flew thro’ the greenwood, breast to breast,
Till in the deepest, thickest shade,
Our secret resting-place we made.

At length ! At length my hopes are crowned !
At length my Eveline is found !
Even in its treasury of ill
Heaven had some mercy for me still !
O ! if thou feel’st thy Arden’s bliss
Whisper it to him in a kiss !—
“Arden !” she faintly, wildly screamed,
The moon which then unclouded streamed,
Fell on her cheek the boughs between—
O God ! it was not Eveline !

Down sank I ; as a corpse that stands,
Falls, when you take away your hands.
Thou treacherous fiend !—dissembler base !—
Thou demon with an angel’s face !
Thou sweet damnation of our race !
Down Hope for ever into hell !
For ever there with Darkness dwell !
Begone ! nor cross my path again !—

Towards the wild shore of lonely Spain
I trod my course thro’ old Bretagne,
Resolved to end my woes upon
The soil where they had first begun.
My mother-earth, proud Albion !
Wrapt in a cloak of palmer’s gray,
As one returned from pilgrimage,
Home then, at last, I took my way,
With cowl and staff like bended Age
I sought some lonely Hermitage,
And heard of one where Sorrow might
Retire from Life’s most tragic stage,—
The cave of a dead anchorite,
On sea-washed Devon’s cliffs of white.

Thither I turned, to lay my bones
Unburied mid these silent stones,
Bleaching on some rude altar there,
A monument to my despair !

Hither I journeyed as I said
With haste to seek my rocky bed
Which tears should never let be dry—
Yet others wept as well as I !
Grief seemed to have a bitter page
To suit the eyes of every age,
Dark solace of Misanthropy !—
A youth I met in Brittany,
Upon whose brow, tho' fair and young,
The cloud of melancholy hung ;
His raven curls and sable plume
Deepened his fix'd look of gloom,
Which scarcely lightened when some pain
At times would shoot across his brain,—
'Twas deadly pale—then dark again.
All speech he shunned, but mine, as if
There was a brotherhood in grief ;
And tho' I often wished to be
Left to my own sad company
I could not to a Youth so fair,
So desolate, refuse his prayer,
That he "might journey o'er the wild
With the good Pilgrim as his child ;
For he had far," he said, "to go."
I strove, but could not say him No !

Together then we journeyed on ;
Like father and his youthful son ;
For Grief was canker to my prime,
And Wo had done the work of Time,
And cloak and staff and scallop-shell
Suited my tremulous accent well ;
Nor seemed I other than I would
When bent, and muffled in my hood.

As dumbly on we paced, I thought ;
This then I find my earthly lot,
To comfort them that wretched be
And succour woe with sympathy ;

For this have I been versed in grief
To teach me secrets of relief;
From sorrow I have learned the art,
Dear bought ! to bind the broken heart.
A sad, sad office to be given—
But 'tis the word and will of Heaven !
I bent to its decree, tho' late,
And blind so long, now see my fate !
With this poor youth (I heard him sigh)
My ministry begins, said I !
Strange that so young and fair a Boy
Should be such enemy to joy !
His voice is mournful as the rill
That leaves for aye its parent-hill ;
He never smiles, or smiles as tho'
It were the last resource of wo :
Some vision seems to haunt his mind,
He often starts and looks behind,
As if some foe or spectre grim,
Studious of blood, still followed him.

I raised my cowl, prepared to speak
Soothly ; when with a piercing shriek,
"The fiend ! the fiend !" he madly cried,
And nestled closely by my side.
I turned to see : no fiend was there ;
Two horsemen galloped in the rear.
"Thou foolish youth ! dost fear two men
Galloping homeward thro' the glen ?"
He answered not ; but smiled as pale
As a lone lily in a dale.
I thought his very limbs would fail ;
Like ivy round an elder tree,
He crept, he clung, he grew to me ;
And trembling pulled me from the way
Which thro' the mountain-valley lay.
"No ! we must quit the sunny road,"
Said I, "this leads to my abode ;
The deep, green, silent valley's shade
Seems for the weary pilgrim made.
No harm shall fall thee be assured."
Doubtful he stood awhile ; but lured
By hope of aid from me, advanced,
Yet often thro' the copsewood glanced

On either side the dusky bourne ;
And oft looked back, but feared to turn.

O Fortune ! had'st thou yet in store,
For one so sad, one sorrow more ?
Or why does Reason keep my brow ?
Madness itself were mercy now !

Scarce had we pondered thro' the vale,
Each on his own oft-cited tale,
When rushing like a mountain-wind,
As if both horse and man were blind
Down swept the riders we had seen,
Upon us from a dark ravine.
At the fair Boy, with demon laugh
One strook : I felled him with my staff,
And plucked the weapon from his hand,
The other, with life-threatening brand,
Had quit his steed, to follow where
The youth had fled in his despair.
Seizing his belt, I whirled him back,
And stood between him and the track ;
His very helmet seemed to grin
With spite that swelled the face within ;
And—"Felon ! clad in friar's gray !
Dar'st thou, presumptuous ! stop my way ?
Slave ! see if thou sustain no harm
From this same iron-bolted arm !
Which never smites but once, and then
Hath never need to smite again !" —
"Nor shall !" I said ; and at the word,
Pushed thro' his soul my dexterous sword.
He fell, and writhing on the ground,
Poured out his life-blood thro' the wound.

I oped the sinner's casque, for air—
"Bull-throated !—bloodshot eye !—red hair !—
O Heavens ! my brother's murderer !" —
'Twas Simon on the greensward lay,
Breathing his crimson life away !—
I knelt, he clutched my hand of blood,
Muttered, and pointed to the wood ;
Gasped—strove—but as he would have spoke,
The death-sweat o'er his forehead broke,
Nor breathed he aught but his death-croak.

Glaring at Heaven he turned him tow'rd
The dead man lay, with bosom gored,
Stretched like the cross he ne'er adored!

Long o'er the stiffening corpse, surprise
And horror fixed my glassy eyes;
Till brighter, like the crescent, grew
Some speck of memory anew.
Sudden it shone! it blazed! it spread
Like a hell-fire about my head!
What meant that clutch of agony?
That strife with Death's strong mastery?
Ha! he still points to yonder grove!
Methinks his torpid fingers move!—
The Boy! the Boy!—some dreadful truth
Hangs round that miserable youth!
Scaped he or not that treacherous wound,
Alive or dead he shall be found!

As wings the cushat thro' the grove
To find his wedded, wounded love,
So thro' the matted forest I
Winged with a like intensity.
As the sore-wounded, timorous dove
Retires within the brake to die,
So did the gentle Youth remove
Where he might perish silently.
I found him underneath a cave
Leaning beside a chrystal well,
Into whose green translucent wave
His piteous tears in silence fell.
He dipt his napkin in the spring,
And wiped therewith his pallid brow;
But all the plaint and murmuring,
Was from the little stream I trow,
That bubbled, all too crimson, by;
For scarce the Youth was seen to sigh.

But oh! more near, I saw his breast
Heave thro' his scarcely-opened vest.
'Tis white as undescended snows,
Or the pure foam that crests the linn!
Full as a woman's breast it rose
That time he put his napkin in!

O pity ! see the breast doth bleed !
And 'tis a woman's breast indeed !

I placed her dying on my knee,
Her bonnet fell upon the green
Her golden hair flowed splendidly—
O God ! it is my Eveline !—
“ Is this, is this your mercy, Fate ?
Is this the work of Hope or Hate,
To place,” I blasphemously cried,
“ Within my arms a dying Bride ? ”

That voice recalled her from the skies,
“ Why ”—and she gazed with dim surprise,
“ Why from the grave of absence rise
To greet in vain my closing eyes ?—
Yet no !—’tis much to see thy face,
To feel, once more, thy kind embrace ;
I am content, if so thou art,
To find me near thy beating heart ;
’Tis much to hear thy tender tone,
To die in thy loved arms alone.”—

These words I echoed with a groan
Wishing my sorrows to beguile,
She strove,—but ’twas such pain to smile,
Her lips were grave again—

I wept
Some unknown tears mine eyes had kept,
They seemed the bitterest of the whole,
The dregs of Sorrow’s undrained bowl.

“ Weep not ! ” she said ; “ but let us give
The few short moments I can live
To sweet affection—Care and Wo
Young Arden ! have they changed thee so ?

Alas ! ’twas vain so true to be ;
Why did’st thou still remember me ?—
Thy Eveline, too weak for strife,
Was made the old Lord Walter’s wife,
While thou, who might’st have been my aid,
Wert on the couch of sickness laid ;
Spite of her grief his bride he bore
To wild Illyria’s murmuring shore ;

But threat, nor prayer, deceit, nor dread,
Could force me to his hated bed ;
For still I hoped when he had died
I should have been thy unstained bride.”—

Sighing (tho’ half-immortal !) here,
She wept another human tear.

Then as I kissed it off : “ Nor long
Lived the old Baron. All the wrong
He did, lay with him in his grave.
My soul was on the Adrian wave,
And, bird-like, o’er the shivering foam,
Returned to love, and thee, and home.
But—Fortune razed what Fancy reared !
Ere died the Baron, oft appeared

Scowling amid the Castle walls
Two visages my childhood feared ;
Nay, glared upon me in the halls,
Or from the gloomy woods around,
As I passed on, looked out and frowned.

“ Death came at last, and with it, they
Like vultures to devour the prey,
Both widowers ; so to strife they grew
And Simon his dark brother slew.
Meantime, disguised, afoot I fled,
And begged thro’ France my way and bread ;
But still upon my track pursued
That fiend, yet hungry for my blood,
Lest both my wealth and person, he
Should wrest from him, who married me,
Thyself I hoped : but kindly Fate.
Comes with the boon a pace too late.
My flesh is dead ; my spirit stays
Only to wish thee happy days
I cannot share.”—

The vital blaze
Leapt off and on, with flickering rays—
“ ’Tis sad—almost too sad—that when
So far I ’scaped—that I should then
Be murdered in my native glen !—
Within thy very arms !—so near
The only bliss that made life dear !—

But vain—all vain beneath the sun !
Let the great will of God be done !”—

Her lips grew settled : mine begun—
“ No pity, Heavens ? no mercy ? none ?—
She oped her faint death-clouded eye,
Looked up, and whispered in a sigh
“ We meet—some consolation !—
We meet again before we die !”—
Then joined her sister-saints on high.

Beneath that fountain’s margin-sands
I buried her with my own sad hands ;
And led the little stream to rave
A requiem round her hallowed grave ;
And plucked white roses for her tomb,
Fit emblem of her virgin bloom,
Her beauty and her luckless doom !

DRAMATICLES

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I. THE VOYAGE.

SCENE—*A Castle-hall.*

CREDULAR *and* MENDES, *at Table.*

CRED. Nine hundred fathoms, didst thou say? what, nine!

Prythee, again; that I may glut mine ears
With admiration. Hundred! Stars above!
A wave nine hundred fathom high!

MEN. Ay, from the base to the brow.

CRED. O lowly hills! what are ye all to this!

MEN. Tut! a mere water-bubble.

CRED. Bubble! bubble! what a throat has he
Who'd swallow such a bubble!

MEN. Lord, sir!—the sea was then
Scarce in its merry mood. This was a time
We well might call the silvery time o' the flood;
So clear, so bright, so sweet, so little dread,
The halcyon and the sail-blown nautilus
Might in the glass-green waves their image see
As gay as in a calm; this was a time
The wind slept in the cradle of our mast
And only dreamt of blowing. Hadst thou seen
The tempest rouse himself, and shake his mane,
That were a sight indeed! Then we had waves!

CRED. Ah! higher than these?

MEN. As far above their cope,
As heav'n's sev'nth roof above the floor of hell.

CRED. O! wondrous! O, what it is to be a voyager!
Prythee, good Mendes, pray good signior Mendes,
My compotator—and my excellent friend—
Let's have these miracles. Come, sir! a glass of wine;
Nay, by Saint Jago! but you shall—

Wine helps the tongue, the memory, and the wit ;
I pledge you, sir. Now for your storms and waves !

MEN. A—you'll pardon me plain phrase ?
We cavaliers o' the quarter-deck, we knights o' the mast,
We sailors, are a rough-mouth'd breed ; we talk
Loud as the sea-horse laughs ; our ocean-phrase
Smacks of the shell—Tritonian—somewhat rude—
But then for truth, hard truth—

CRED. No whit more true in fact than choice in phrase
I'll warrant thee, signior Traveller. Rude !—what, rude !—
Your breath is worth an atmosphere of that
Spent by us fireside men.

Come, sir ! the Voyage, from the snout to the tail.

MEN. Sir, you shall hear.
We sailed from Genoa ; summer-sweet the morn ;
The winds that blew ere night were out of breath,
Spent with their over-blowing ; as a scold
Seized with a spasm, so stood the storm—stock-still.

CRED. Good.

MEN. The amorous breeze sigh'd in our galley's sail,
And, like a lover, press'd her tow'rds his couch,
That lay right on the lee.

CRED. Aha ! the winds can woo :
How liked your bark this soft persuasion ?

MEN. On flew the sea-bird ; fair, and fast, and free ;
Sweeping her way to Spain ; the kindling foam
Stream'd from the sharp division of her keel—

CRED. 'Sblood, sir ! you talk like a water-poet.
Sailor-like indeed ! Let's have some ribaldry.

MEN. It is not time for tempest yet, sir ; here was a
calm.

CRED. Ay, ay ; Queen Amphitrite rode the waves.

MEN. Yes, sir,
And green-tail'd Tritons too ; and water-nymphs,
Pillion'd on dolphins, comb'd their weedy locks,
Whilst the bluff sea-god blew his shrill shell horn.

CRED. 'Tis vouch'd by the ancients, mermaids have
been seen ;
And dolphins too ; and men with horns—

MEN. O ! commonly.

CRED. Well, signior Argonaut.

MEN. What shall be said o' the sun ? Shall he shine
in peace ?
Shall's thrust him by ? Shall's leave him out o' the bill ?

CRED. Leave out the sun? in broad daylight? impossible!
Past twilight, signior, and the sun must shine
Whether we will or no.

MEN. True.
The heavens look'd like a dome of turquoise stone,
Athwart which crept (as it might be) a snail,
With golden shell, emburnish'd till it blazed;
This was the sun.

CRED. Good, good; go on.

MEN. Now, mark!
Scarce had this sun-like snail, or snail-like sun,
Paused at the viewless boundary of morn
Where moon begins and ends, when—mark me, signior—
Nay, you don't mark—

CRED. I do, sir; slit mine ears!

MEN. When the swol'n storm, recovering all its rage,
Nay, trebly fraught with elemental rack,
Burst in a rattling hurricane around!

CRED. O! excellent! Well—

MEN. The blustering, bellowing, brimstone-breathing
blast,
(Whipt by some fiend broke loose from Erebus)
First struck the surly ocean; ocean roared.

CRED. O! well done, ocean! brave ocean!

MEN. Another blow.

CRED. O! excellent! Well, sir—

MEN. Well, sir, you must think,
The sea, provoked by this assault, grew angry.

CRED. Why, if 'twere made of milk 'twould rage at this.

MEN. Rage! O, for words! It raged, and swell'd as if
'Twould fill the concave, and with impious waves
Burst the empyreal doors!

CRED. O! excellent!
O, what a man might do in a tub! translate himself!
More o' the storm, signior, more o' the storm, if you love me.

MEN. The groaning sky hurl'd down wing'd thunder-
bolts,
Thick as it erst rain'd quails on Israel;
The clouds dropt fire, fast as you'd boulder gold
Ta'en from the Tagus' bed; while the hair-brain'd storm
Mixed up a second chaos; drown'd distinction;
Mingled the roaring billows with the clouds;
And daub'd the face of heaven with filthy sand
Torn from the sea-bed wild!—

CRED. O ! excellent ! A little more villainy, signior.

MEN. The hell-black heav'ns grew neighbour to the waves
And cloak'd us in the utter pall of night.
Lightning our only day ; and every flash
Lit a grim scene : like Pelions lost in clouds
Stood the tall billows, and the rueful waste
Look'd like a mountain-field of wintry snow,
So beaten into foam and yeasty, they.

CRED. O ! excellent ! O ! excellent !

MEN. Here were a time indeed to cry, O hills !
Why, man, we rode so far above thy hills,
That—if truth's credible—I saw th' Antipodes.

CRED. Th' Antipodes !—breath !—

MEN. Under the great toe ; just as it might be here ;
As plain's this shoe, I saw th' Antipodes.

CRED. Good lack ! what wondrous sights these travellers see !

MEN. There are other puffs i' the wind.

CRED. Ha ! Have you any more miracles ?

MEN. Good sir, you take the height of possible
By the span of a small experience ; coop'd here
Between two neighbouring hills, which lave their feet
In the calm tide of this sequester'd strand,
You mete your earth, your ocean, and your air,
By an unequal measure.

CRED. I' faith, 'tis so.

MEN. But we, who are men o' the world, who've walk'd
the waves

On two-inch boards, who've seen the fiends o' the storm
Unmanac'd, we know something.

CRED. True as th' Apocrypha, true as th' Apocrypha.
Where did we leave ?—

Ay—at th' Antipodes. Did the bark bide buffet ?

MEN. Like a tennis-ball.—

Mark, sir ; we'd clear'd the gulf ; the dying storm
Throbb'd in heart-sick convulsions ; and the sky
Dabbled its dark with dun. All was yet well ;
When doubling round the shoulders of the Alp
That knits broad France to boot-shaped Italy,
Behold !—a sea of storm came rushing down,
That blew us in a whiff to Barbary.

CRED. What ! in one whiff ?

MEN. Mark, sir ; I'd one hand on the gunwale thus ;
With t'other I had hoodwink'd thus mine eyes,

Wrapt in mine own profundity ; the wind
Sobb'd heavily ; I woke, and saw our Christian hills
Before me ; shut mine eyes in peace ; the blast
Roar'd ! I look'd up—and lo ! as I stand here,
Afric seem'd wedded to our continent !
A Pagan bay shelter'd our Catholic bark.

CRED. Holy Virgin ! Would you swear 'twas Pagan ?

MEN. Ay, on the Koran. Hark ye—
I pull'd the Dey of Tunis by the beard,
Look ! here are some o' the hairs !

CRED. As God's alive, it is a proof ! 'Tis plain
You could not pluck a beard in Africa
And you in Italy ; 'tis a proof, a proof.
Well—and what next ? Saw you no monsters ?

MEN. Frequent as figs. Sir, I've a monstrous tale
For every notch upon the dial ; how
We fought with griffins, grappled with green dragons,
Wept with crocodiles, supp'd with cannibals,
Set traps for pigmies, dug pitfalls for giants—

CRED. I thought your fairy-tales were only lies !

MEN. If I lie now, may sixpence slit the tongue
Of Gasco Mendes !—then, I shall lie doubly.

CRED. The doom's too horrible. [*Horn without.*]

Whew ! the brass rings clear !

We'll hear these miracles another time.—
Good night, good signior.—Well—truth's truth—that's plain
As my own nose ;—yet still—I can but cry,—
Good lack ! what wondrous sights these travellers see !

[*Exeunt.*]

II. THE CHASE.

Persons:—

AMARYLLO, *a young lord of Spain.*

SYLVIAN, *his friend ; an Italian.*

MARINEL, *a sea-captain.*

NERINA, *a Catalan girl.*

Scene lies near Rosas in Catalonia.

SCENE.—*The Sea-shore. Shipwreck at a distance. Storm ;
with fits of Sunshine.*

Enter SYLVIAN and MARINEL.

MARINEL. Welcome, sir ! Welcome to our wild sea-coast :
What though it show bleak and inhospitable,

Kindness was ever coy ; a maid's first kiss,
Colder than moonlight prints the cloud withal,
Ne'er yet might dash the wooer.

SYLVIAN. Ay, but this salutation was too rough :
The high-hung wave on which our bark sat balanced,
Seem'd in suspense whether 'twould yield or no
Its burthen to the shock of an embrace
With such hard-hearted and unfriendly stones ;
But you think nought of this, good Marinel,
You who have talk'd with death so oft, that all
His threats have lost their terror.

MARINEL. True, sir ; true :
I've been so toss'd, by wind and saucy wave,
So harried, toil-worn, bruised and buffeted,—
(All in the way of my profession,)—that I hold
Dangers no longer in my memory
Than whilst they strike ; and striking,
Count them but sports o' the time. But where the while
Stays your young friend ? he that sung amorous songs
To the tune o' the storm, and swore the prancing waves
Look'd like young tilters at a tournament ?

SYLVIAN. Lord Amaryllo ?

MARINEL. Ay ; he that we brought o'er from Genoa.

SYLVIAN. He ! O—he scarcely knew himself for alive,
Or shook the stunning waters from his ears,

When some young mountain-nymph shows him a glimpse
Of her slender leg, and—off ! he's after her.

MARINEL. Ha ! ha ! ha ! A brave lad ! a brave lad !
I laugh'd to see him shake his fist at the wave
That curl'd upon the strand to pounce upon him,
Then dart like a wild sea-mew up the rocks.
Where shall we look to find him ?

SYLVIAN. Why if we knew what antre or what oak
That same fair Oread makes her tabernacle,
The bank whereon she sits, or rushes where she lies,
We had some hope of finding him.

MARINEL. Not else ?
Then Love must be his pilot. Keep the way ;
He cannot miss the hamlet on the hill :
Come, sir.

SYLVIAN. I'll follow you. What, Amaryllo !
Call back this wanton falcon. Amaryllo !

MARINEL. What ho ! lord Amaryllo ! [*Exeunt, crying*
"Amaryllo !"]

SYLVIAN. Was the coy nymph so light of foot, my lord?

AMARYLLO. Whew! man; she'd walk th' immaculate
unpaced snow

And leave it printless; walk the sea itself
Nor wet her upper slipper: light of foot?
By Cupid's bow! she's swifter than his arrow.

SYLVIAN. And wounds as sure?

AMARYLLO. Never came sorer wounds from sweeter eyes:
She is a very paramour for angels.

SYLVIAN. Where did you leave her? pulling of rushes,
To make a baby-bed some nine months' hence?

AMARYLLO. No.

SYLVIAN. Well, a soft couch for your limbs to-night?

AMARYLLO. No, signior; no. When I had gain'd
upon her,

(Woman, you wot, makes Nimrods of us all),
Turning, she stopp'd; and standing like a flower
Ready to yield its beauty to the scythe
If gentle sweetness could not move the spoiler,—
Struck by the silent supplication, I
Stood mute and lost my purpose.

SYLVIAN. Iris and Clown; she stands, he gapes,—she's
gone!

AMARYLLO. Iris indeed; and vanish'd all in tears.

SYLVIAN. Tears?

AMARYLLO. Ay,—of joy; what else? when Iris weeps,
Is't not a sign the heav'ns will soon be glad?
No maiden weeps other than joyous tears
Whom Amaryllo woos.

SYLVIAN. No, but some do, in lovely Italy,
Whom Amaryll' has won.

AMARYLLO. Oh! ay; their tears
Would swell the Tyrrhen waters to o'ertop
The woody Apennine, and drown the Alp:
Ay, ay, oh! ay; I'll tell thee, signior Sylvian:—
The tears Italian girls weep for my sake,
Might lie i' the bowl of a new-budded flow'r,
A breakfast for one bee.

SYLVIAN. 'Tis well, my lord,
This is not shriving-time; else you'd confess
You speak not as you think: but I'm no priest
Come to absolve you of your mortal sins,
Nor you a penitent—

AMARYLLO. Now love forbid!

Come, will you help me catch this runaway?
This feather-footed Daphne of the hill?

SYLVIAN. Prythee, give o'er:
Here is no time for capping butterflies;
We lost three weeks with you in Genoa
Doing such pranks, that th' ancient City fear'd
A new-faced progeny; and the grave citizens
Lock'd up their merchandise to watch their wives:
Fie, my lord! fie!

AMARYLLO. Ha! ha!

MARINEL. Your brother's palace, sir. [Pointing.]

AMARYLLO. Was't not this way she sped?

SYLVIAN. Come away, you thistle-down!
The air itself is not so light as you are.
Where would you seek her, now?

AMARYLLO. I'll find her out:
Though she were hid i' the eagle's aerie; housed
With Echo in her rock-defenced retreat;
Though she couch'd by the secret river-urn,
Lost in the sedgy cresses, there I'll find her:
And if I play the woman as before—

NERINA (*from the cave*). Oh! heav'ns!

AMARYLLO. Hark!
Was't not a sigh? My cap to a capuchin,
Here lies some dying hermit: Soft, ye branches;
[Going to the cave.]

Some holy man; some mortified, careworn—Part,
Ye green impediments:—some desert friar,
Whose bones hereafter will be canonized,
And stolen for amulets;—By your leave, sweet willows;—
I'll in, and comfort him:—Alack, poor man! [Entering.]
Poor, feeble,—(I was ever piteous):—Where d'ye lie, sir?
Couch-rid, no doubt; and weak—

[Nerina runs out, and escapes up the rocks.]

A miracle! a miracle!
Our anchorite's turn'd angel! Mounts to heav'n!—
Spirit, Spirit, a word with you; nay, by'r lady!
I'll have a pluck at your wing: Hillos, Vapour, Spirit!
Take me along—Hillos! [Exit, pursuing Nerina.]

SYLVIAN. Was ever such an antelope?

MARINEL. He's a wild one!
There he goes! o'er the hill and down the hollow,
Like a ship i' the dancing green. Make we to harbour.
[Exeunt.]

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Scene changes to the Mountain Rocks.

Enter NERINA, as pursued.

NERINA. Which is—the storm or this young mad-cap—
bolder?

Soft! soft my bosom!—Juno! here's a gallant!
Sooth! he'll ne'er want maids' gifts through modesty:—
Where shall I hide me? What! I must ramble forth,
Fond fool! no romancing through these rocky glens,
'Tide what 'tide may. Ha! here's a cave: kind fortune!
[*Enters the cave.*
Heav'n keep that spring-foot greyhound from my lair!

Re-enter SYLVIAN and MARINEL.

SYLVIAN. Where can this chase have led him?

MARINEL. He's not here.

SYLVIAN. No. Is the hamlet this way?

MARINEL. Peering over us:

Mark you yon dusky wreaths that climb the air
Feeding the smoky clouds? they speak of housewifery,
Comfort, and cheer; see! there's the village mill,
Its long sails furl'd.

SYLVIAN. You know these shores, good Marinel:
What towers are these, those yellow-pointed spires
Give back his golden radiance to the sun
Gleaming at times? these, here upon the right?

MARINEL. The lord of Rosas'.

SYLVIAN. Amaryllo's brother!
'Tis a foul wind blows no one home. Of Rosas, say you?
How speaks report of this same lord of Rosas?

MARINEL. Something above the mark; a noble heart.

SYLVIAN. What, like this grasshopper?

MARINEL. No, no, no, no; as different from this
As darkness is from daylight: Yet not so;
Yet 'tis so: Faith! I know not what it is:
I never saw the man nor those who did;
But those, who say they saw those who have seen him,
Tell tales of him I would not tell the skies,
Lest they should blast me for the utterance.

SYLVIAN. Why not as well as those who told these tales?—

MARINEL. O! sir, there are men
Not worth the spending of a thunderbolt;
Heav'n neither heeds nor hears, say what they will:
Did you not mark a fellow in the ship,

As we came posting o'er the seas from Italy,
Who sat upon the bow, and rail'd at heav'n,
Ev'n to the very forks o' the lightning?
Mendes, I think they call him.

SYLVIAN. A peer of Rodomonte! a huge liar!
He bore the packet from the lord of Rosas
To us at Padua, bidding us to Spain;
Me and his brother Amaryllo.

MARINEL. Let me tell you,
He's a grave man: he told me of this lord:—
How that, one night, beneath the sickening moon,
Whose cheek grew paler with unusual white,
This self-same undiscover'd lord of Rosas,
Whilst thunder roar'd, and the dark elements
Conversed in horrible confusion over him— [Thunder.
Hush! hush! I've hurt the ears of heaven.

SYLVIAN. You have;
And thus it bellows out its pain. O folly!

MARINEL. Why, do you not believe this fact?

SYLVIAN. No, not a point of it:
Tush, tush, good captain, leave such goblin tales
To freeze the huddling circle at the fire.
Come! let's away. What, Amaryllo! ho! [Exit.

MARINEL. I'm with you, sir.
That thunder did not growl for nothing:—
Ho! my Lord Amaryllo!—'Twas a peal!
It seem'd the stern commandment of the sky
Saying, *No more! No more!* in mighty murmurs.
Stay, signior.—Ho! What ho! Lord Amaryllo! [Exit.

Enter AMARYLLO.

AMARYLLO. What ho! Lord Amaryllo! Amaryllo! ho!

Re-enter SYLVIAN and MARINEL.

MARINEL. Here, my lord! here!

SYLVIAN. We thought you far before, my lord.

AMARYLLO. And so I was; before, behind, beside;
Running my thread of error like a spirit:
Why, sirs, there's not a hillock nor a dell,
A green close, nor a rocky cavern,
Within a day's walk hence, but I have trod
Since you twain and I last parted.

MARINEL. Half an hour.

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